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Interzone

Imaginative fiction & art
STRANGE MEMORIES OF DEATH by PHILIP K. DICK



EDITORIAL

Last issue we described *Interzone* as a magazine of radical science fiction and fantasy. Now we should like to go further, and outline (however haphazardly) a type of story that we want to see much more of in this magazine: the radical, hard SF story. We wish to publish more fiction which takes its inspiration from science, and which uses the language of science in a creative way. It may be fantastic, surrealistic, "illogical", but in order to be radical, hard SF it should explore in some fashion the perspectives opened up by contemporary science and technology. Some would argue that the new electronic gadgetry is displacing the printed word—if so, writers should fight back, using guerrilla tactics as necessary and infiltrating the territory of the enemy. Or, to change metaphorical gears...

Ridley Scott was Philip K. Dick's fairy godfather. We may argue whether it's a golden coach or a pumpkin, but there's no question that *Blade Runner* was the vehicle that brought Dick to the ball. *Blade Runner* the book outsold *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Fortunately, the two are the same in all but title. Dick, thank goodness, refused to have his feet crammed into the usual perspex slippers. Film and TV versions sell novels that have lingered on the shelves, or dropped out of print altogether. The electronic media are so much more immediate: missed in a cover featuring the logo and a still, the original book becomes a takeaway version of the movie. The possibility of even this temporary re-emergence will shrink as video meets that domestic demand more and more promptly and cheaply.

Written fiction today holds a subsidiary position to electronic fictions, which include records, cassettes, and video and computer games. Each of these fulfills part of the complex function of the novel or short story, in ways that make it currently more commercial than either. There is no sense in agonising about the "primacy", the "purity", the "authenticity" of the written word. New information systems make available new levels of articulation of meaning. At the same time there is no sense in announcing the death of print. There will always be books, and print will co-exist with electronics. New fictional forms will be devised for each. What William Burroughs did for the tape recorder a new imaginative writer must do for the home computer.

Interzone is delighted to have received a generous donation from Sir Clive Sinclair, the man who is doing most to sponsor new fiction from the bounty of new technology. Sir Clive hereby becomes our first lifetime subscriber. Any other readers who approve of what we're doing and would like to support us with a gift of, say, fifty pounds or more can become lifetime subscribers in the same way. And a free lifetime subscription awaits the winner of our competition to find that new science fiction for the electronic age.

As we read the week that comes in to us at *Interzone* we're seeing signs that something new is imminent—an idea here, an image there. We can't conjure it into being—we don't necessarily know what it will be! But we can encourage its

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Editors: John Clute, Alan Dorey, Colin Greenland, Simon Gainsley and David Pringle

Art Editor: Ian Miller

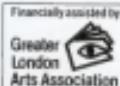
Designer: Abigail Frost

Assistant Editors: Paul Annis and Andy Robertson

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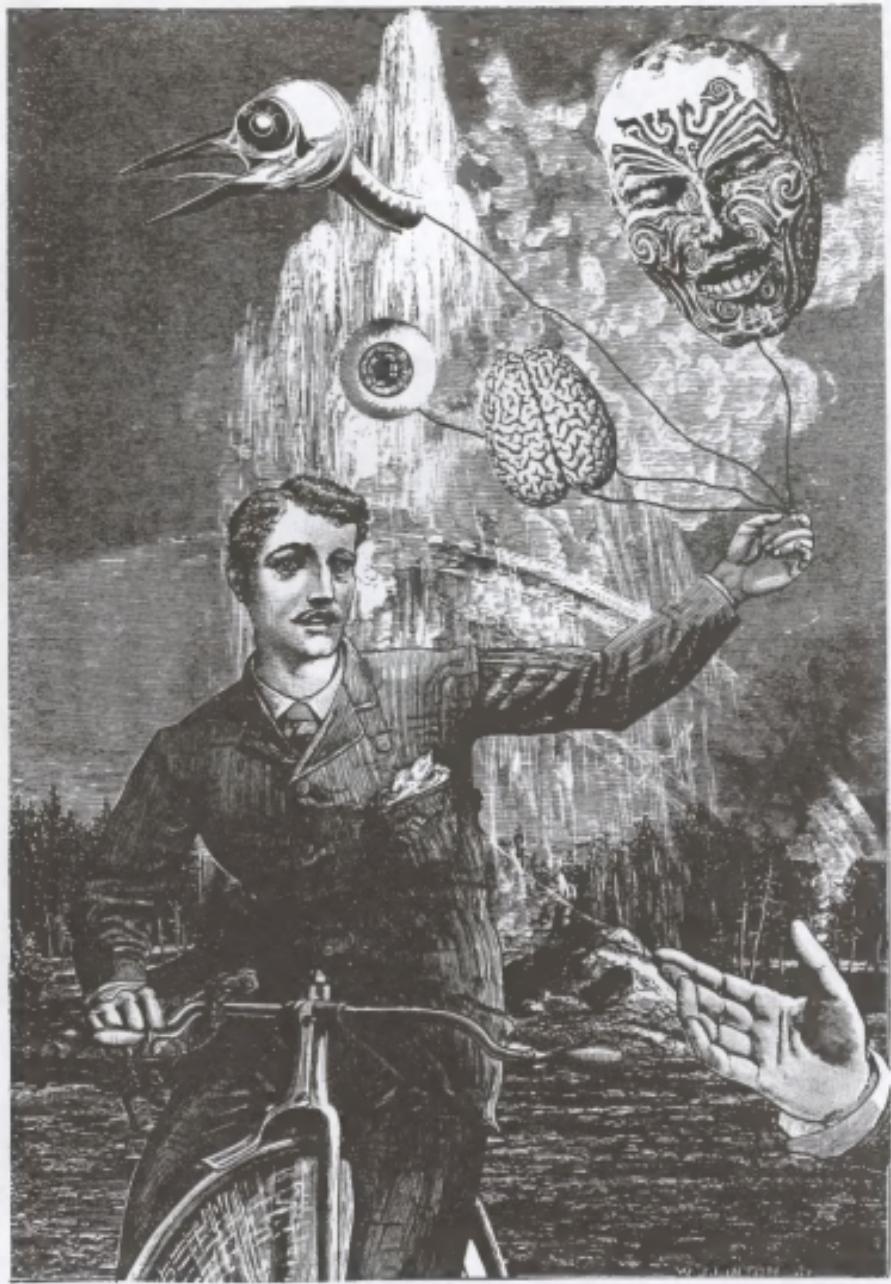
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emergence. What we're looking for is a fiction that is as radical and hard as the implications of the new technology itself. It will be radical SF because it will be critical and investigative, facing up to the science and technology of the present and future as we now see them, rather than as John W. Campbell saw them. At the same time it will be hard SF, using the hard-edged language and imagery of technology for imaginative interpretations of reality rather than departures into fantasy. Radical, hard SF: not necessarily future realism, or applied sociology, or breezy tales of technological fixes in an all too familiar vein.

The prize will go to the author of the best such story we receive before 31st December 1984. The competition is open to anyone, new or established writers alike. If you wish your work to be included, please identify it as an entry in a covering letter. We reserve the right to consider any other stories that come our way in that time. We'll publish the winner, and any worthy runners-up, at our usual rates. *Interzone* will continue to publish a broad range of the best imaginative writing available, so space considerations dictate we prefer stories under 8,000 words; but we're open, as ever, to longer works of exceptional quality.

David Pringle and Colin Greenland

[See letter, page 40]



Frontispiece: Richard Kadrey

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THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING COLLECTIVE



The spirit of Interzone: exceptionally shrunken collective and friends. From left, Greenland, Pringle; Angela Carter and John Sladek, two authors who've been with us from the start; Dorey, Clute. Simon Ounsley is present in spirit alone.

Those of you who scan assiduously this magazine's masthead details may have noticed that Rox Kaveney is no longer listed as an editor of Interzone. She is leaving us to devote herself full-time to a new editorial venture for a leading publisher. We offer her our congratulations, and our thanks for all the hard work.

Interzone began with eight editors and now has five: Alan Dorey, Colin Greenland, David Pringle, John Clute and Simon Ounsley. The magazine is owned and published collectively by those five people—although we are heavily dependent on our irreplaceable Art Editor, Designer, Typesetter, Printer, and two Assistant Editors:

Here are a few details of the remaining members of the Editorial Collective:

John Clute is well known as a book reviewer (Washington Post, *F & SF*, and elsewhere) and as the Associate Editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1979). He is the author of a novel, *The Disinheriting Party* (1977), and has been the Reviews Editor of *Foundation* for the past four years. He lives in London.

Alan Dorey is a graduate of Leeds University, where he was the editor of the fanzine *Black Hole*. He is now the Chairman of the British Science Fiction Association. He works for an insurance company and lives near Manchester.

Colin Greenland is a freelance writer and critic. His D.Phil thesis for Oxford University became the book *The Entropy Exhibition* (Routledge, 1983). He reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* and elsewhere, and has a novel coming from Allen and Unwin this year. He lives in Essex.

Simon Ounsley works in engineering. He has been on the organising committees of several *Iseng* conventions and he is now Interzone's treasurer. He lives in Leeds and occasionally produces the highly-peaked fanzine *Still It Moves*.

David Pringle works in the administration at Brighton Polytechnic. He is an ex-librarian, and has been the Editor of *Foundation*: The Review of Science Fiction since 1980. He moved from Leeds to Brighton in 1982.

SCOTT BRADFIELD

Every time Sandra Mitchelson's Daddy came home on the boat he brought her things. French chocolates, a stuffed elephant, a beret, a golden heart-shaped locket, a yellow kimono printed with red lotus blossoms, a transistor radio, a hand-painted porcelain Japanese doll with a rice-paper parasol. In return Sandra helped him work in the back yard. The front yard was covered with gravel, but the back yard was covered with tall yellow weeds. "This will be our family area," Daddy said, knee-deep in the weeds. "We'll have a barbecue, a swingset, a bird bath, a trellis, maybe even someday a swimming pool." They already had a fish pond. The water was dark and smoky, rimmed with algae. Large gold and lead coloured fish glimmered dully in the muck, slowly blinking their bulbous eyes like monsters surfacing from some nightmare. Sandra held Daddy's white cloth hat and watched him hit the ground with a shovel. He overturned convexes of damp black earth, severed worms and pulsing white slugs. Sandra liked the pungent, musty odour of the fertilizer, and rode on Daddy's back while he pushed the reseeder. They watered every morning, and soon tiny green shoots appeared. After Daddy disengaged the garden hose he filled his coarse red hands with water from the tap, flung the water into the bright summer sky and told Sandra the sparkling droplets were diamonds. Sandra tried to catch them, but they slipped through her fingers. One day she sat down on the patio and cried. Daddy promptly took her to the store and bought her a tiny "Genuine" brand diamond set in a thin copper band. The next morning he went away on the boat.

The new grass died, the earth turned gray and broken. Mrs Mitchelson said, "He wants a lawn? Then let him water it his damn self." She toasted her reflection in the twilit picture window. "Here's to your damn lawn. Here's to your damn family area." Bourbon and crushed ice spilled over the rim of her glass. In the afternoons Sandra sat alone on the living room floor and observed through the smudged picture

Unmistakably the Finest

window the gradual destruction of the yard. In the spring, weeds grew—strange enormous weeds as tall as Daddy, bristling with thorns and burs and furred, twisted leaves. Scorched by the summer sun the weeds cracked and fell and, when the spring returned, the mat of dead weeds prevented new weeds from sprouting. Sandra asked when Daddy would be home. Mrs Mitchelson said, "Never, if I have anything to do about it," and departed for the pawn shop with the heart-shaped locket, the transistor radio, the tiny "Genuine" diamond ring. "You want to know what all that junk was worth?" Mrs Mitchelson shouted, looming over Sandra's bed at three a.m. Sandra sat up, blinked at the light, rubbed her eyes. Mrs Mitchelson's eyes were red and wet and mottled with discounted cosmetics. "Twenty bucks. That's how much he loves you. Your wonderful father. Your father who is so wonderful." Mrs Mitchelson stormed out of the room, the front door slammed. Sandra rolled over and went back to sleep. That summer they sold the house.

In Bakersfield Mrs Mitchelson worked at the Jolly Roger Fun and Games Lounge next door to the public library. Every day after school Sandra waited in the library and read magazines. She especially liked the large, slick magazines that contained numerous full-page advertisements. She enjoyed reading phrases such as "unmistakably the finest," "the affordability of excellence," "the passionate abandon of crushed velour." When the library closed at nine she sat outside on the bus bench and thought about the sharp, clear photographs. Fashions by Christian Dior, natural wood grain furniture, Chinese porcelain, a castle in Spain, a microwave oven with digital timer, an automobile with a leopard crouched and snarling on the hood. The doors of the Jolly Roger swung open and closed, releasing intermittent bursts of smoke, laughter and juke-box music. Buses roared past. Sometimes one of Mrs Mitchelson friends drove them home. Nervous, unshaven men, their cars were usually littered with plumbing or automotive tools; cigarettes with long

gray ashes dangled from their mouths. They ate pretzels and laughed with Mrs Mitchelson in the living room while Sandra went quietly to bed.

They lived in Pasadena, Glendale, Hawthorne, Encino. Sandra finished high school in Burbank, acquired a receptionist's job in Beverly Hills. They took a one bedroom apartment in Compton, which included some cracked windowpanes and numerous discreet cockroaches. Weekdays, however, Sandra sat at an immaculate mahogany desk in the public relations firm of Zeitlin and Morgan. She answered telephone calls (often from television and film celebrities), organized the week's appointments in a large leather-bound black ledger, typed advertising copy, and allowed clients into the security building by activating a hidden white buzzer.

Sandra was usually alone in the office. Mr Zeitlin had retired to compose Bermuda post-cards. Mr Morgan—with his distinguished gray hair, taut polished cheek-bones and jogging outfit—arrived each day around elevenish, then quickly departed with Elaine, the leggy secretary, for the afternoon luncheon appointment. Occasionally Mr Morgan's son Matthew dropped by and asked for Elaine. "Off with the old man again, huh? When am I supposed to get my chance?" Sandra admired Matthew—his capped white teeth, his knit ties, his shirts by Pierre Cardin. He resembled a man of "casual elegance," sipping Chivas Regal on a sailboat, displaying jocadache emblems at garden parties. Matthew was an executive with the Jiffy-Quick Messenger Corporation of Southern California. His solid-gold tie-clasp depicted the comical (but fleet-footed) Jiffy Man dashing unflappably to his appointed destination. "My Dad didn't just hand me the job, either," he assured Sandra. "I started off at the bottom, and absolutely refused any sort of preferential treatment. I even drove the delivery van one weekend, so nobody can say I didn't pay my dues. It literally took me months to get where I am



I wish I could get a minute's peace around this place." She gripped the frayed arm of the couch with both hands, pushed herself to her feet. "But don't worry about me. Just because I gave birth to you, just because I took care of you when you were sick and helpless." Mrs. Mitchelson took three short steps and landed in the faded rattan chair. The chair creaked sympathetically. "I'm not saying I was perfect. I'm not saying I didn't make my share of mistakes. But at least I tried to give you a good home—which is sure a hell of a lot more than your father ever did."

"Sit down, Mom. I'll get your dinner."

"Do you think it's easy for me? Do you? Getting older and weaker every day, so sick I can hardly breathe sometimes. Just sitting around this lousy apartment wondering how much longer I've got left in this miserable life."

"Please, Mom. Don't say things like that." Sandra folded the comforter and slipped it under the couch. "Do you want Tater Tots or French Fries with your dinner?"

Mrs. Mitchelson's attention was diverted by the teetee tray which stood beside her chair. The tray held a depleted gallon jug of Safeway brand bourbon, an uncapped litre bottle of Coca Cola, and an unwashed Bullwinkle glass. "Why not? Why shouldn't I say it? I hope I do die. I hope I die tomorrow—how do you like that?" Mrs. Mitchelson absently cleaned the glass with the sleeve of her blue flannel bathrobe. "You wouldn't miss me. You'd finally be free of me, just like your father." She filled Bullwinkle waist-high with bourbon, added a few stale drops of Coke for texture. "When I needed your father, where was he? Traipsing all over the world, that's where he was. You might as well be a thousand miles away too, for all the good you ever do me... Ah." Mrs. Mitchelson put down the empty glass and snapped her dentures with satisfaction.

In the kitchenette Sandra turned on the stove, emptied a can of Spaghetti O's into a saucepan. She could hear the neck of the Safeway jug clink again against the rim of the glass.

"When I remember when I was younger, all the opportunities I had. I had a lot of boyfriends. They took me to nice restaurants, bought me expensive presents. Then I met your father. I was so stupid stupid stupid. I threw everything away for that louse. Now look at me."

Bullwinkle looked at her.

The following morning Mrs. Mitchelson was admitted to City Hospital. "This is just what you've been waiting for, isn't it? Now I'll be out of your hair for good." Mrs. Mitchelson's voice was uncharacteristically restrained. Sometimes she almost whispered, leaning toward the side of the bed where Sandra sat, clutching the ends of the stiff white sheet in her thin gray hands. "But just you wait. Now you'll learn what it's like to be alone. You'll know the hell I went through when your father left me for some cheap Filipina whore." Mrs. Mitchelson's eyes were wide and clear and moist, like the eyes of Bullwinkle on the drinking glass. Sandra sat quietly with her mother behind the cracked plastic partitions, listened faintly to the moans and cries of neighbouring patients, read paperback romances in which elegant women were kidnapped and fiercely seduced by pirates, rebel

today, and it was never any picnic, let me tell you. But I like to think that in the long run my employees will respect me for it."

At four o'clock Sandra pulled the plastic jacket over the IBM, replaced paper-clips and memoranda in their appropriate drawers, and locked the office. On her way to the bus stop she window-shopped along Rodeo Drive, observed silk crepe de chine slacks at Mille Chemises, solid-gold Piaget quartz crystal watches at Van Cleef & Arpels. She admired the white, unblemished features and long cool necks of the mannequins; their postures were perfect, their expressions distant and unperturbed, as if they attended a fashionable cocktail party at the heart of some iceberg. Mercedes and Mercedes were parked along the curbs, and elderly women in low-cut blouses walked poodles on stainless-steel leashes. Everything and everybody appeared immaculate and eternal, like Pompeian artifacts preserved in lava. Sandra avoided her own reflection in the sunny windowfronts—her pale white skin, her shiny polyester skirt—which made her feel like a trespasser in a museum. She caught the 6.15 bus and generally arrived home just after dark.

Mrs. Mitchelson started awake at the sound of Sandra's key in the lock, sat bolt upright on the living room couch. "Who's that? What do you want?"

Sandra opened the hall closet, removed a hanger. "It's only me. Go back to sleep."

Mrs. Mitchelson's dry tongue worked soundlessly in her mouth, she cleared her throat. "Well," she said experimentally. "Well, I wish I could go back to sleep.

cavalry officers, terrifically endowed plantation slaves. Mrs Mitchelson's cirrhosis was complicated by undiagnosed leukemia, and she died unexpectedly just before dawn on a Monday morning. Sandra was fixing coffee in the kitchenette when the nurse called. Her mother had been wrong, she abruptly discovered. She did not feel alone, she did not feel betrayed. She did not, in fact, feel much of anything. She took the morning off from work, arranged disposition with the hospital crematorium, and smoked a pack of Mrs Mitchelson's cigarettes.

The medical bills were formidable, and Sandra had less money than ever at the end of each month. Her window-shopping expeditions grew less frequent, and she took an earlier bus home. Without Mrs Mitchelson to care for she rarely thought to fix dinner. She became pale and listless. Elaine said, "Why don't you lunch at Romane's today? They've got an outdoor patio, and it's a beautiful day." Instead Sandra remained in the office alone, lunched on vended crackers, bagels and candy bars.

Then one night Sandra discovered Reverend Fanny Bright and the Worldwide Church of Prosperity. Reverend Fanny's sermons were broadcast live every Saturday evening from Macon, Georgia. Reverend Fanny told her followers, "You can't expect happiness to just come knocking. You must pursue riches, you must pursue happiness, you must pursue the power of Divine Creation. When you see something pretty you want to buy, how many times have you told yourself, 'I cannot afford this?' Is that what you think, children? Is that what you believe? Then you are negating the power of Divine Creation. You must convince yourself you can afford anything. You can afford it, you will purchase it, you shall possess it. You must impress your super-conscious with affirmation. The super-conscious is His workshop where, with the divine scissors of His power, He is constantly cutting out the events of your life. But first you must show Him the patterns of your desire, you must fill your mind with beautiful things." After each sermon Reverend Fanny pulled a chair up close to the audience and solicited tales of miraculous prosperity. Middle-aged men and women described flourishing investments, sudden cash gifts from strangers on the street, gratuitous office promotions. "All I want to tell you," one woman said, "is that I love you, Reverend Fanny. Prosperity has taught me how to love. Now I no longer feel so empty and alone."

Every month Sandra mailed the Church a check for ten dollars. In reply she received a mimeographed request for further donations. The stationery was inscribed with the Church motto: If you do not wish to be denied riches, you must not deny riches to others. Sandra closed out her savings, transferred the \$2,386.00 to her previously minimal checking account, and prepared herself for imminent prosperity. She purchased navy cashmere sweaters, suede pants, a silk crepe blouse dress fringed with lace, a deep breasted brown satin coat, labels by Calvin Klein, Oscar De La Renta, Halston, Adolfo, Bill Blass, Ralph Lauren. She joined a health spa, subscribed to tanning treatments, visited prestigious beauty salons. Her checking balance dropped quickly to nineteen hundred, thirteen-fifty, one thousand. She did not question the beneficence of Divine Creation; instead she used her Visa card. Elaine



said, "You're looking so much better, girl. Why don't we have a drink after work? I'm meeting a couple of Tokyo software executives, they told me to bring a friend." Mr Morgan granted Sandra a fifty dollar raise and told her, "You really bring a lot of class to the office," on his way to a toothpaste manufacturer and lobster bisque.

Church doctrine was unequivocally validated. Sandra increased her monthly contribution to thirty dollars.

Then one night Sandra discovered her super-conscious in a dream. She ascended a long winding staircase. She was wearing her white ankle-length "Cameo lace" nightgown from Vassarette, her Nazareno Gabrielli padded cashmere slippers. Her fingers ran lightly along a polished oak bannister. The summit of stairs met a long off-white corridor lit by globed ceiling fixtures. The fixtures were white, opaque, and sprinkled with the silhouettes of mummified insects. At the end of the corridor a solitary door stood slightly ajar. Bright yellow light from behind the door cast long, angular shadows down the length of the corridor. Sandra stepped quietly, afraid of disturbing anyone. As she approached the door she grew light-headed, her ears popped, as if she were descending in an airplane. The tarnished aluminum doorknob rattled at her touch. She pushed open the door.

The room was small, windowless, lit by a naked overhead bulb. Cobwebs scribbled the pale walls and cornices. The plaster was pitted and crumbling, mottled by an extensive network of cracks and crevices. The hardwood floors were sagging, whorled and discoloured. A full-feature model A-20 integrated ampli-

She sat in the middle of the floor beside a matching AM-FM stereo digital frequency synthesized tuner and cassette player. An identical system had been advertised in Stereo Review, and Sandra still recalled many of its vital statistics. A pair of three-way loudspeakers were stacked against the wall, with 12-inch woofers, 4-inch midrange drivers, and 1-inch dome tweeters housed in walnut veneer cabinetry. A mass of electric cords were joined by a plastic adaptor to a solitary wall outlet. A tiny green light activated on the amplifier's monochrome panel, an eight-track tape clacked faintly inside the tape player. The speakers suffused the room with white, cottony static.

Louis Armstrong began to sing, accompanied by bass, piano and drums.

Baby, take me down to Duke's Place,

Wildest fox in town is Duke's Place,

Love that piano sound of Duke's Place . . .

Sandra disliked jazz, pulled shut the door. The music diminished to a low persistent bass that fluttered in the off-white corridor like a staggered pulse. The door's surface was formica, with simulated wood grain. She tested the knob, the lock clicked soundly. Then she woke up.

It was still dark when the music awoke Sandra on the living room couch. She reached sleepily for the portable television. The green, baleful screen stared vacantly back at her, containing only her dim reflection—a shrunken body attached to one enormous, elongated hand. Louis Armstrong continued to sing.

Take your tootsies in to Duke's Place.

Life is in the swim at Duke's Place . . .

The bass thudded soundly in the floors, the walls, the cracked wooden frame of the couch.

Sandra turned on the lamp and saw the stereo components stacked against the far wall, partially hidden behind the teevee tray. The amplifier's monochrome panel glittered intricately. I am a miracle magnet, Sandra thought, recalling one of Reverend Fanny's prescribed affirmations. Beautiful things are drawn irresistibly to me. I give thanks that every day and in every way I grow richer and richer.

On her way to work Sandra mailed the Church a check for one hundred dollars.

That night she couldn't sleep. She lay on her back on the couch, her hands folded on her stomach. She closed her eyes and tried to visualize the off-white corridor, the half-open door. What did she want to find inside? A colour teevee, jewelry, kitchen appliances, a new car? What kind of car, what colour? Would it fit inside the room? How, exactly, had the room looked? She remembered the pitted walls, the stained floors, the quality of light—but she couldn't put all the elements together at once. A Maserati, she decided finally. Like the one Mr. Moegan drives. There, it's all decided. Now she was closing the door. Okay, the door is closed. Everything is very dark. Had she heard the living room floor creak just now? Yes, she was almost certain. Still, she kept her eyes closed a few more minutes.

She sat up and opened her eyes. The living room contained the portable teevee, the aluminium teevee tray, the new stereo, the broken wall clock, the dingy venetian blinds.

She closed her eyes and tried again. No matter how hard she concentrated she could not make the car appear. It was nearly dawn before she fell asleep, and only then did she stand again on the winding staircase. The wooden stairs were firm and cold against her feet; they even creaked occasionally. The car, she wondered. Will the car be there, or something else? It doesn't matter, she told herself. She would accept what was given. She wasn't choosy; she wasn't greedy. She only wanted her fair share. She walked to the end of the corridor, pushed open the door. Books were stacked haphazardly around the small, otherwise empty room. Dozens and dozens of books, as if waiting to be shelved by some divine librarian. Sandra stood at the doorway, but she did not go inside. The room's strange powers might harm her, she thought—jolt her like electricity, sting her like fire. She pulled the door shut.

When she awoke the next morning she examined her new books. They were accompanied by a bright orange and green brochure, which described them as "The Greatest Books Ever Written," *Madame Bovary*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Fathers and Sons*, *The Red and the Black*, *Jude the Obscure*. Each volume was bound in genuine leather and filled with numerous illustrations by "the World's Greatest Modern Artists." She imagined the spines upright and glistening on a brand new bookshelf. A blonde oak bookshelf, perhaps. With glass-panel doors, and gleaming gold fixtures . . . But any bookshelf will be fine, she reminded herself abruptly. Really, any kind at all. She wasn't in any sort of a hurry. She didn't want to test the power; she didn't want to challenge it unduly. She would accept what was given.

Every night the dream recurred and the room presented her with beautiful things. A Schumacher "Pride of Kashmir" Indian rug, a hand-carved Japanese console with iridescent moire lacquer wash, a hand-cut glass chandelier by Waterford, a Miro original, a Roe Kaslari dining set, a Giancarlo Ripa white shadow fox fur. The next time Matthew visited the office she was wearing Fernando Sanchez's latest, a sheer silk taffeta dress anchored to a black lace bra. Her ruby earrings were the colour of pigeon's blood. Matthew sat on the edge of her desk.

"You like Japanese food?"

Sandra stopped typing, looked up. Her lashes were Borghese, her mascara Lancôme. "I guess I don't know. I've never had it before."

"Never?" Matthew's face was puzzled, as if confronted by an enigma. "Tempura, teriyaki, Miso soup? You're in for a real treat. I know the best place in town. They've got shrimp the size of my fist." He showed her his fist for emphasis. "How does eight sound?"

"Eight?"

"All right. Eight-thirty—but try and be on time. I'll only honk twice. Here." He handed her the stereo pad. "I'll need your address. Draw me a little map or something."

Matthew picked her up at nine and they drove directly to his apartment, a West Hollywood duplex. "Is the restaurant nearby?" Sandra asked. For the occasion she wore an obi—a broad black sash belt—with her cobalt blue, raw-silk dress. "It just suddenly occurred to me," Matthew said. "They probably aren't open Thursdays. I'm almost certain, in fact. If you're hungry,

see what's in the fridge." In bed Matthew was fastidious. His hands and mouth made routine, scheduled stops at each of her erogenous zones, like miniature trains on a track. Sandra, meanwhile, observed herself in the mirrored ceiling. "What's the matter with you?" he asked finally. "You didn't tell me you had problems with men." Matthew's body was sleek, firm, unblemished. His underwear was by Calvin Klein, his cologne by Ralph Lauren. Sandra said she just wanted him to hold her, and Matthew grew suddenly tense in her arms. He said he was short of cash at the moment—could she pay her own cab fare home? He would reimburse her.

Matthew stopped coming by the office. Whenever Sandra called his home she couldn't get past the girl at his answering service.

Matthew Morgan residence—Mr Morgan is out at the moment. Can I take a message?"

At this point Sandra usually heard the click of a second extension being lifted, and knew Matthew was listening when she asked, "Has he picked up his messages today?"

"One second and I'll check... This is Sandra again, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm afraid he still hasn't called in. But you could leave another message, if you liked..."

One day Sandra waited outside Matthew's office building until he emerged for lunch. "You know I really care about you," he said. "I just think it would be better if we didn't see each other for a while. It's nothing the matter with you, baby. It's me. I don't think I'm ready to make the kind of commitments you seem to expect from a man. You tend to be very possessive—which is fine, it's only right..." He paused to wave at his secretary, who tapped one foot impatiently at the curb. "Look, baby. Let's talk about this later in the week, okay? We'll have lunch. And do you think I could borrow a twenty until then?" He palpated his vest pocket. "Seems I left my wallet in the office."

Matthew never called. Sandra waited at home, certain he would. She broke dates with Mr Takata, the software executive, and Steve, her aerobics instructor. It was only a matter of time. Matthew would come around. She was a miracle magnet. She was one with the creative power. One night she received an Amana trash compactor, the next a Zenith Gemini 2000 colour television. "You must not be afraid of total fulfillment," Reverend Fanny warned, her brows knit with sincerity. The glazed, speckless television screen crackled with static electricity as Sandra reached to increase the volume. "You mustn't fear, you mustn't doubt, you mustn't lose faith. Total fulfillment requires total commitment. Have you, for instance, hoarded away a little nest egg, some rainy-day money? Then you doubt the complete power of Divine Creation. Why put a time-lock on your security savings when your love can be bullish on the stock-exchange of heavenly devotion?"

That afternoon Sandra walked to the corner and mailed the Church a check for \$327.43, the balance of her account. Later the same night Matthew called.

"Hello, Sandra?"

"Yes."

"Sandra, baby. It's me. Matthew. You remember me, don't you?"

"Of course I do."

"I know I should've called. But it's been really hectic in the messenger biz, you know?"

"I'm sure it has."

"You're not mad or anything, are you? I seem to sense a lot of hostility on your part. I know I owe you twenty and all—"

"No, I'm not mad. I'm glad you called. I was waiting for you to call."

"Good. Look, I was thinking. Let's have dinner tonight. All right with you? I'll pick you up a little after eight, we'll go find a nice quiet spot."

Matthew arrived at half past ten, and rang the doorbell.

"You think my car's safe parked around here? It's so late, I thought we could scrounge up a snack right here. You can show me around your apartment." Matthew entered the living room. "Hey, where'd all this great stuff come from?" He reached for the tape player—Louis Armstrong's Greatest Hits. Lengths of crumpled brown magnetic tape spilled onto the floor. "Seems you've got the tape caught on the heads. If you've got a screwdriver, I can probably fix it."

"I pushed a wrong button or something." Sandra explained quickly, took the tape from his hands and plugged it back into the player. "I'll have it fixed one of these days. I just like the way it looks. It really brightens up the room, don't you think?"

"What's down here? Is this the bedroom?"

Sandra followed Matthew through the door. He crouched in the corner of the bedroom, picked up and assessed one silver candelabra. "This is worth a few bucks," he said.

"It's getting late. Aren't you tired?" Sandra asked, and began to straighten the Wamsutta silk sheets.

"Where'd you get all this loot? My old man doesn't pay you this well just to answer telephones."

"My father sends me things. My father has a very important job in Asia. Now, please—put those things down. Get into bed."

"What a sweet deal. I think I'd like to meet this old man of yours someday."

Sandra pushed Matthew's hands away from her belt. She just wanted him to hold her, she said again. This time, he obliged.

Sandra and Matthew were very happy together for a while. She enjoyed cooking his meals in the microwave, washing his clothes in the Maytag. Every morning she walked to Winchell's and brought him coffee and jelly donuts. Matthew took the next few weeks off from work. "I want to be with you more," he said, wiped a dollop of red jelly from his chin, and peered over Sandra's shoulder at the new Panasonic Omnivision VHS video recorder with wireless remote. "I never saw that before. Did it just arrive this morning or something?"

Every evening Sandra stopped by the market on her way home. Matthew requested steak, swordfish, veal, king crab, champagne, Jack Daniel's Tennessee Sour Mash. She began computing her checking balance in negative numbers. When she arrived home Matthew was usually on the phone in the bedroom. "—yeah, Bernie. It's me, Matt... I know I haven't been home—I



Reverend Fanny bright

don't see what it matters to you where I'm staying. I want you to put a grand on Blue Tone in the sixth . . . Bernie, don't insult me. You know my old man's good for it."

Sandra collected soiled glasses and plates from the living room. On the burnished mahogany coffee table she noticed a tiny, soft white mound of powder centred on a small, rectangular mirror. A gold-plated razor blade, attached to a silver chain, lay beside it. She took the dishes into the kitchen, started hot water in the sink, wiped a bit of fried egg off the lid of the trash compactor. Her mail was stacked on the countertop. A lengthy, itemized Viss statement. The landlord's second eviction notice. Urgent utility bills with bold red borders. My mind is centred in infinite wealth, Sandra reminded herself, and opened the last envelope. Dear Friend, the letter began. Are you prepared to receive the wealth of Divine Creation? Then you must be prepared to dispense wealth to others. Wealth flows two ways, not one, thus maintaining universal harmony. The letter was concluded by Reverend Fanny's mimeographed scrawl. Sandra removed her checkbook from the kitchen drawer, computed her balance on the Texas Instruments Scientific Calculator. Zeitlin and Moegan would pay her Wednesday. Perhaps she could deposit the paycheck in time for her outstanding checks to clear. Her balance, then, would be \$23.97. She thought for a moment, turned off the sink faucet, dried her hands on a towel. I am a money magnet. Every dollar I spend comes back to me multiplied. I have all the time, energy and money I require to accomplish all of my desires.

She wrote the Church a check for one thousand

dollars. She licked and sealed the envelope, then heard the broiler door squeak open behind her. She turned.

"Porterhouse, huh? Great, baby. My favourite." Matthew slammed the broiler door shut. "Listen, I need to ask you a little favour—*por favor*? Just a couple hundred for a day or two. My accountant's got all my assets tied up in some sort of bonds or something. I don't really understand all the technical details. It'll take me a few days to get hold of some cash. You know these accountants. They think it's their money, right?"

Matthew's smile was beautiful. His teeth actually sparkled, like the teeth in television commercials. Matthew and Sandra are very, very happy together, Sandra thought. Marriage, they both realize, is inevitable. They mean so much to each other. They will honeymoon in Brussels, where Matthew has important family. After a year they will return to the States where, with the aid of a personable nurse, Sandra will raise two beautiful, adopted children, a girl and a boy. Matthew will eventually be recruited into politics. "We need you," his influential friends will say. "You're the only man who can beat Patterson." Matthew will win by a narrow margin, but his re-election four years later will come in a landslide. They will rent a Manhattan penthouse, and Matthew will commute to Washington.

"I can write you a check," Sandra said.

One morning before she left for work Sandra made a long-distance call to Macon, Georgia. "Worldwide Church of Prosperity," the receptionist said. "How can we help each other?"

Sandra asked to speak with Reverend Fanny, and the receptionist said, "Oh, I'm afraid that simply isn't possible. Regrettably, the Reverend's numerous personal and public commitments make it virtually impossible for her to speak privately with each and every one of her brethren. But should you, perhaps, be contemplating sizeable donations—say, ten thousand or more, and all of it tax-deductible, of course—then I might be able to connect you with one of the Reverend's close advisors—"

"I am contemplating sizeable donations," Sandra assured her. "I am eternally grateful to the power of Divine Creation. My life is abundant with beautiful things. But at the moment I'm experiencing some problems of cash-flow . . ."

"Oh," the receptionist said.

"—I'm sure it's just a temporary problem—but I was wondering if there weren't any special prayers or affirmations for someone in my situation. You know, prayers which might focus my miracles a little more. And please, don't think I'm trying to be greedy or anything—"

"Cash is not wealth," the receptionist said. "Money only travels in one direction. True wealth flows both ways. If you would like to give me your address, I'll see to it you receive our free monthly newsletter."

On Friday Sandra received a series of overdraft charges from her bank, and a tense telephone call from the local Safeway manager. "I realize these things happen," the manager said. "Have to admit even I've bounced a few in my day. But how

soon can I expect your check to clear?" Very soon, Sandra answered. She would deposit funds first thing tomorrow morning. She was so embarrassed. It wouldn't happen again.

"You'll get your damn money!" Mrs Mitchelson used to shout, after the store's third call or so. "What's the matter with you people, anyway? Don't you realize I'm just a single woman trying to raise a child? No—you listen for a minute. You men always expect us to listen to you—well, you listen for a change. I'll pay you when I'm good and ready, and not a minute sooner. And another thing. You've got the worst stinking produce section in the city, do you know that? Your apples are wormy, your lettuce is wilted, your vegetables are rotten. Do you hear me? Rotten. Instead of me paying you, you should pay me for all the lousy produce I bought from your store and then had to throw away. That's what I think." After Mrs Mitchelson hung up the phone she would fix herself a drink and then tell Sandra to go and pack her suitcase. "We're going to stay with your Aunt Lois again for a while," Mrs Mitchelson would say. "Then maybe we can find a new home where the bastards will let us live in peace."

After Sandra hung up the phone, as a sort of grudging memorial to her mother, she climbed a stool, reached the Safeway jug down from a high, dusty shelf, and poured herself a drink. She carried her glass into the living room, which was crowded with mismatched and exorbitant furniture, video and stereo components, unopened crates of records, Abrams art books and glassware, like the award display on some television game show. Matthew was playing Galactic Midway, an arcade pinball machine by Bally. Bells chimed, lights flashed, hidden levers pumped the next gleaming silver ball into position. Gripping the machine's sides Matthew nudged it slightly from time to time. "Have a good day at work?" He pushed the reset button. On the scoreboard the digits clacked noisily around to zero.

"It was okay." Sandra cleared some stray pearls from the ottoman and sat down.

"Did I tell you the electric company called? Something about a last notice. I think I'd look into it if I were you."

On the coffee table the mound of soft white powder had nearly doubled in size, like a miniature avalanche. Sandra sipped her drink, glanced around the room.

After a while she asked, "Where's my new VHS? My video recorder. The one I got this week."

The flippers clacked noisily. Then Matthew hit the machine with his fist. "Damn!"

"The VHS. I asked what happened to it."

"How the hell do I know?" Matthew pushed the reset button. "Do I look like the maid or something? It's around some place. You probably haven't looked hard enough."

"I don't see it. It was in the living room this morning. It couldn't just get up and walk away."

"It'll turn up, you'll see. Everything turns up eventually," Matthew said, and pumped another ball into the game.



Matthew

That night Sandra sat down and wrote a letter on her IBM Selectric.

Dear Reverend Fanny,

Please excuse the fact my check didn't clear. I had a very bad week last week. I tried to call and explain but the lady who answered the phone said you were very busy. I will try to make the check good at some date in the near future. I agree that if I expect to receive riches I must not deny riches to others, but I'm afraid my boyfriend Matthew whom I live with sold my Tiffany silverware set yesterday while I was at work in order to pay his gambling debts. Also he says he took my tape deck into be repaired but I doubt that seriously. Also my electricity is being shut off tomorrow unless I pay them which I can't, and then what good will my new teevee or any of my new kitchen appliances be good for? I would appreciate any help or advice on these matters you might like to impart to me. I wish I could send you money like I usually do but I'll try to send you twice as much next time and hope you understand and forgive my present fiscal situation.

Yours faithfully,

Sandra Mitchelson

When Sandra fell asleep later that night she did not dream of the corridor. She dreamed instead of vast darkness, where silence filled everything like a heavy fluid. The fluid filled her mouth, throat, lungs. Breathing was impossible. I believe, she thought. I believe, I believe. She looked up and thought she detected, at the surface, a glimmer of white light. She tried to push herself up through the black weight but something gripped her ankle, something warm, pulsing, insistent. Like a tentacle, it moved up her leg. "Baby," the darkness said.

Sandra started upright in bed. The bedroom glowed with dim moonlight.

"Baby," Matthew said again. His arms wrapped themselves around her waist, his hands pulled her back into the weighted darkness.

On Monday when Sandra returned home from work she found Matthew in the bedroom, packing his Cricketeer wardrobe into the Samsonite. "I think I've done my part. I can honestly say I've done my share to make this relationship work." Underneath the packed clothes the tip of a silver candelabra glinted dully. "But I'm the type of guy who demands a certain amount of honesty from a woman. Once she starts lying to me I know it's time to hit the road."

"I never lied," Sandra said. "I sent the electric company a check, just like I said. It must have gotten lost in the mail—"

"I'm not talking about that and you know it. I'm not talking about the fact there aren't any lights or any food in the house—or even that the television doesn't work. I'm not talking about what it's like living in the goddamn Stone Age. I'm talking about simple honesty—something you obviously know nothing about. I'm talking about the check you gave me for Bernie which wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. I'm talking about my reputation in this town, which is now just about shot because of you."

"I'll make it good," Sandra said. "It won't be any problem. We can sell the television, the washing machine—"

"It's just a little late for that. Bernie went to my old man for the dough. I'm free and clear. I've still got a job to go back to, or don't you remember. You didn't really expect me to live here all my life, did you? In Compton?" Matthew latched the suitcase and swung it off the bed.

"You have to stay. You can't leave," Sandra said, over and over again as she followed him down the hall and watched him walk out the front door.

The telephone was disconnected, the water, eventually the gas. Every night the vast, liquid darkness displaced Sandra's dream of the miraculous corridor. Elaine said. "You look like hell, girl. When was the last time you took a bath? There's a distinct odour creeping into this office, and don't think Mr Morgan hasn't noticed it." At the end of the week Sandra returned home and found the front door sealed shut by the Sheriff's Department. The lock had been changed. She jimmied open the bedroom window, the one with the faulty latch.

Everything was gone. The brass bed, the pinball machine, the Mysing, the Lenox crystal. Rectangles of dust marked the former locations of impounded furniture. The room grew dark, and Sandra went to the window, turned open the venetian blinds. Outside it was dusk. She watched the phototropic streetlamps glow and gradually brighten, casting pale, watery red light through the blinds. Now she had nothing, and it didn't surprise her one bit. She was stupid, she never did anything right. Mrs Mitchelson was right, Reverend Fanny was right, Matthew was right. Everybody was right, everybody except her. She was all alone; she was afraid of total commitment; she was dishonest—dishonest with herself. She was sick of being wrong all the time. Things must change; things were going to be different, now. I am going to be different, she thought. From now on I'm going to be right, I'm going to make the right decisions.

She just needed one more chance. Finally she knew what it was she wanted, and that was the important thing. It was all very simple, really, like psychoanalysis on television. She wanted someone who cared about her, someone who would stay with her. Staring out the window at the streetlamp Sandra leaned against the wall. Eventually she grew sleepy and closed her eyes.

She heard the door open behind her, the crack of the ruptured plastic seal.

Sandra opened her eyes. "Matthew?" She turned around. The door stood open, the living room remained empty. She walked to the door and looked out. The air was filled with blinding, devotional light. I am one with the creative power, Sandra reminded herself. I am not afraid. I believe, and I am not afraid. She stepped outside.

She stood again on the winding staircase. As she ascended she turned and caught a brief glimpse of the downstairs room. The light swirled and dust motes revolved slowly, like nebulas and constellations in some twilit planetarium. Large wooden packing crates were stacked everywhere, the lids nailed shut.

Sandra reached the summit of stairs. At the end of the corridor the door stood slightly ajar.

Quickly she crossed the length of the corridor, flung open the door and, without a second thought, stepped inside.

The overhead bulb flickered and extinguished with

a sudden pop. She was not afraid, she told herself. The place was very cold and very dark. Slowly her eyes adjusted. Tall yellow weeds surrounded her, rippling as an icy breeze blew past. The foundation of the fish pond was broken and upthrust; all the water had drained away, leaving a few green puddles of algae. The skeletons of the monstrous goldfish, partially devoured by stray cats, lay strewn about the yard like weird leaves. She got down on her knees. Burns and thorns scratched her legs. Her hands groped among the weeds, discovered fragments of the Japanese porcelain doll. The tattered rice-paper parasol was damp and stained with mildew. She heard a noise and looked up.

A tall figure stood between her and the half open door.

"Daddy?" Sandra asked.

Another sudden breeze blew past. The door slammed shut.

"Isn't that just what I should have expected." The dark figure approached, briefly stumbled. "Damn—I could break my leg on these lousy gopher holes. Just look what a holy mess your father made of this place. But who's the first person you hope to see? Who's the first person you ask for? Your father, your wonderful father. Your father who never called, who never wrote, who never came to visit, who certainly never provided one nickel of support. Your wonderful father who never really gave a good goddamn whether either of us lived or died."

Sandra sat down on the damp ground, weeds brushing against her face. The porcelain fragments crumbled apart in her hands.

"Aren't you a little old to be playing in the dirt? Here, get up." Mrs Mitchelson offered her hand. Sandra took it, pulled herself to her feet. "Try and grow up a little, will you? I can't keep my eyes on you every minute. Just look at this mess." Mrs Mitchelson slapped the dirt from Sandra's knees.

They took one another's hand. Mrs Mitchelson's hand was cold and dry and soft. Sandra squeezed it tightly against her stomach, afraid of the dark.

Scott Bradfield is now acting as this magazine's American agent. He lives in Costa Mesa, near Los Angeles, having recently moved there from nearby Long Beach. It seems we were mistaken when we said in interview 5 that "The Flash! Kid" was his first published story—he had had a couple of pieces published obscurely in American anthologies of the mid-1970s. However, we still feel he is one of our finest "discoveries". Asked to write about himself, Scott has kindly sent us the following notes:

"I was born in San Francisco in 1955, and have lived all my life in California. I was attracted to science fiction in the late sixties by the likes of Disch, Seltz, Ballard, Delany, and the various writers then appearing in *New Worlds* and *Orbit*. I wrote some terrible stuff while in high school, then actually sold and published some of it. I wrote infrequently after that, and never very well. Just a few years ago I happened to meet a favourite novelist of mine, Brian Moore, who offered me enough encouragement that I'm again trying to write short stories. I feel a particular dedication to the short story, but it is also a form I find extraordinarily difficult; as a result, I'm not very prolific. To cop a line from Godard, I consider 'The Flash! Kid', published in *I25*, my second first



"Try and remember that sometimes I need a little help and consideration too, you know. I can't do everything. I can only do the best I can, that's all. The best I can. Come on, now, and fix my dinner. It's been ages since I've had a decent meal in this dump."

Then, together in the deepening darkness, they made their way carefully across the ruined yard towards the shadows of the house.

story. It's recently been purchased by Karl Edward Wagner for his annual "horror" anthology. My only other recent publication has been in *The Twilight Zone Magazine*.

"The last eight years I've lived in Southern California, a strange place I'm only gradually learning to write about in stories like the preceding. Presently I attend graduate school at UC Irvine where, it's repeatedly explained to me by people who know, I'm not really a writer since I'm not enrolled in a Creative Writing Program (the purpose of which programs, I believe, is to produce more Creative Writing instructors). If I can stick it out, I'd like to pick up a PhD and teach somewhere while I continue writing stories. I have this crackpot theory that education is a genuinely good idea, and that the universities should consider making it a vital part of their curriculum. In the English Department, I'm primarily concerned with the way literature—and the institutional interpretation of literature—is controlled by specific political and historical situations. Ultimately I believe the university's influence on literature is a perverse and diabolical one; my object of research is not literature so much as the university itself."

"Some of my favourite contemporary writers—the aforementioned Moore, Richard Yates, Georges Simenon, J.D. Salinger and Graham Greene."



Chris Jones
THE ELECTRIC ZOO

Jasper suddenly saw signs: "Be gentle to the beast in here."
What though our humble hart awaits these signs in doubt?



Why was this air and cloud thus from flaming hill espoused
before heav'ly guardians nigh dimm'd this radiant eye?

John Milton arranged by CG

DREAMERS

Kim Newman

Elvis Kurtz was dreaming. He dreamed he was John F. Kennedy, former president (1960 — Lee Harvey Oswald) of the former United States of America. The dream was a riot of pornography; involving enormous wealth, extreme power, intermittent ultra-violence, and sex with Marilyn Monroe. It was a presold success. An inevitable Iridium Tape. An inescapable quinquillion-seller.

Kurtz was dybukking, a passenger in the mind. Kurtz was aware of what John Yeovil thought it felt like to be John Fitzgerald Kennedy in August 1961. He had access to a neatly arranged file of memories, plus a few precog glimpses carried over from waking life. He would have to pull out before Dallas. The JFK simile was not aware of Kurtz. Actually, the JFK simile hardly seemed to be aware of anything.

Yeovil had had JFK plump his mistress' bottom on the edge of the presidential desk, and penetrate the former Norma Jean Baker (1926 — next year) standing up. A pile of authenticated contemporary documents were scrunched up beneath their spectacular copulation.

Kurtz trusted Yeovil had got the externals right. Through the JFK simile he was perceiving the Oval Room precisely as it had been. Marilyn's squalls were done in her actual voice, distilled from over three hundred hours of flatty sound-tracks and disc aural. Yeovil would have had a computer assist handle that. Sometimes Kurtz envied the man's resources.

Marilyn and the president were sexing like well-oiled flesh robots. The dreamership liked their sexing pristine, with all the mess and pain taken out. Kurtz seared his overlay onto the dreamtape, burning a semi-apocalyptic series of multiple climaxes.

This was standard wet-dream stuff. The sort of thing Kurtz could do in his sleep. Kurtz's dybbuk overmind left the internals to his experienced subconscious and skimmed through the simile's memory. He ignored the story-so-far synopsis and picked a few random sensations.

The Pacific, WW II: the smell of burning oil and salt water, all-over Sun heat, repressed fear, an aural loop of *Sentimental Journey*. His father throwing a tantrum: the usual mix of shame, terror and embarrassment. Prawns at Hyannis Port. The inauguration: January chill, tension, incipient megalomania, ". . . ask not what your country can do for you . . ."

Kurtz wondered who had written that speech. Yeovil did not know; all the questions got out of the simile was a momentary white-out. Damn, an extraneous thought. It would bleed onto the tape. Yeovil would have to do a post-erase. With the scene getting near the finish, Kurtz took ego control again.

Yeovil had taken the trouble to insert a 1961 image: Kennedy encapsulated like an ICBM silo: a thermonuclear chain reaction inside Marilyn took her out.

Yawn. Kurtz was an orgasm specialist. He topped the metaphor (too literary, but what did he expect) with a jumble of cross-sensory experiences. He translated the aural stimuli of the *Saint Matthew Passion* into a mass of tactuals. The dream shadow could take it, although a real body would have been blown away.

Marilyn lay face down, exhausted, her hair fanned on the pile carpet. JFK traced her backbone with the presidential seal. Yeovil had Catholic guilt flit through JFK's mind.

"Jack," breathed Marilyn, "did you know there's a theory that the whole universe got started with a Big Bang?"

Kennedy parted Marilyn's hair and kissed the nape of her neck. Kurtz felt a witty reply coming. Something hard at the base of the president's skull. A white hot needle in his head. A brief skin-and-bone agony, then nothing.

Dame Yeovil. Oswald was early.

Like most of the hot ton that year John Yeovil was devoted to Victoriana. The tridiv sages said the craze was a reaction to the acid smogs that had taken to settling on London. Usually Yeovil affected

to despise fashions, but this one suited him. Frock coats and stiff collars became his Holmesian figure, a beard usefully concealed his slash mouth, and the habitual precision of his gestures was ideal for consulting a half-banter, taking a pinch of snuff, or casually slitting footpad's nose with an iridium-assist swordstick.

At thirty-nine Yeovil was rich enough to indulge himself with opium-scented handkerchiefs, long case clocks and wax wreaths under glass. Three of his dreams were in the current q-seller listings. The JFK advance had accounted for the complete redecoration of his Luxborough Street residence.

Awaiting his guest, Yeovil adjusted the pearl pin in his gray cravat. Exactly right. Exact rectitude was all Yeovil asked of life. That and wealth and fame, of course. He sighted his one-sided smile in the mirror. The smile which, flashed during a tridiv interview or frozen on a dustjack, could cost him one million pounds per annum in lost sales alone. A definitive figure would have to take personal appearances, merchandising, and graft into consideration.

The smile was Yeovil's little secret. The mask of the submarine part of his mind he rigidly excluded from his dreams. John Yeovil had come to terms with his character. He lived with himself in relative comfort, despite the fact that he was easily the most hateful person he knew.

He had the dreaming talent, but so did hundreds of others. He had the patience to research and the skill to concept, but any raw Dreamer with funding could buy access to the D-9000 for those. Success in the dream industry was down to depth of feeling. Any feeling.

Great Dreamers were all prodigies of emotion. Susan Bishopric: empathy; Orin Tredway: imbecile love; Alexis St Clare: paranoia. And John Yeovil had hate. It did not come through as such in the dreams, but he knew that it was his great reservoir of hate that gave weight to his conjuring of excitement, joy, pain, and the rest.

The doorbell sounded. Yeovil had sent an in to Elvis Kurtz. The Household admitted him. A few tendrils of smog trailed the guest. The Household dispelled them.

"Mr Kurtz?"

"Uh. Yes." Kurtz was muffled by his outdoor helmet. He pulled out of it. His eyes were watering profusely. Yeovil was familiar with the yellowish stream of tears. "Sorry about this. I have a slight smog."

"My sympathies," said Yeovil. "You can leave your things with the Household."

"Thanks." Kurtz ungauntletted and de-flakjacked. Underneath he wore a GP smock. Yeovil led his guest through the hall. The Household offed the hallway lamps, and upped the gas jets and open fire in the drawing room.

"You were difficult to find, Mr Kurtz."

"I'm supposed to be." He had a trace of accent. Possibly Lichtenstein. "I've been out."

"Of course." Yeovil decanted two preconstituted brandy snifters. "Piracy or pornography?"

"A little of both." Kurtz accepted the drink, smeared his tears, and sagged into a heavy armchair. He was not at ease. As well he might be. Yeovil decided to hit him now, and cover later.

"Mr Kurtz, prior to your incarceration you produced bootleg editions of my dreams which made a sizable dent in my income. I can now offer you the opportunity to repay me."

"Your pardon?" Kurtz was trying not to look startled. Like most Dreamers he was rotten at that sort of thing. Most, Yeovil reminded himself, not all.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to tap you for money. I'll even pay you."

"For what?"

"The use of your talent."

"I don't think you understand . . ."

"I'm well aware of your limitations, Mr Kurtz. Like myself you are a Dreamer. In many ways you are more powerful than I. You are capable of taping sensations far more intensely than I can. Yet I am successful and well-regarded." (by most at least) "and you are reduced to aping my dreams. Or producing work like this."

Yeovil indicated a stack of tapes. Inelegant under-the-counter dreams with clinical titles: *Six Women With Mammary Abnormalities*, *The Ten Minute Orgasm*. They were badly packaged, with lurid artist-imprints on the dustjackets. There was no Dreamer by-line, but Kurtz recognised his own stuff.

"I'm too strong, Yeovil. I can't control my dreams the way you can. My mind doesn't just create, it amplifies and distorts. I wind up with so many resonances and contradictions that the dream falls apart. That's an advantage with one-reel wet dreams, but . . ."

"I don't require of you that you justify yourself, Mr Kurtz. I am an artist. I have no capacity for moral outrage. We have that much in common. Our position is at odds with those of the judiciary, the critical establishment, and the British Board of Dream Censors. Come with me."

The dreaming room was different. Most of the house was a convincing, dark, stuffy, and uncomfortable recreation of the 1890s. The dreaming room was what people in 1963 had expected the future to look like. All the surfaces were a glossy, featureless white.

Kurtz was impressed. He touched his fingertips, then his naked palm, to the glassless wall. He started away, and a condensation handprint faded.

"It's warm. Is that eternity lighting?"

"Partly. I have the dreaming room kept at womb temperature."

"You dream here?"

"Of course. The surrounding have been calculated exactly. Psychologically attuned to be beneficial to the dreaming talent. The recording equipment is substantially what you are familiar with."

"You have computer assist?"

"My Household has a library tap for research. I don't use it much, though. I actually read books. I'm not one of the D-9000's troop of hacks. I don't think we should be the glorified emanuenses of a heuristic pulp mill."

"I don't like the machines either. They hurt." Kurtz was irritated. Good, that should keep him off balance. "What is all this about?"

"Would you be surprised to learn that I am an admirer of your work?"

Kurtz cleared an unconvincing laugh from his throat. "Would you be prepared to say that on the dustjack of *Sixth Form Girls in Chains*?"

Yeovil tapped his ID into the console. The Household extruded a couch from the floor. It looked sculpted. Out of vanilla ice cream.

"Beside yours my talent is lukewarm. I want to make use of your capacities to underline certain aspects of my work in progress."

"Uh huh."

"I am dreaming a historical piece, focusing on the character of John Kennedy, martyred president of the United States of America. Kennedy was known to be a man with a highly passionate nature. I think it not inapt that your touch with erotica be applied."

Kurtz sat on the couch, trying to find the loophole. "What about the certification?"

"I plan on sidestepping the BBDC. They have no real authority, and I am supported by my publishers and the vast public interest in my work. The Board owes its precarious existence to its claim that it represents the desire of the majority. Once that is disproved, they will fall. JFK has been conceived as a radical dream."

"How is this going to work?"

"I've dreamed a guideline. The sequence you'll work on is fully scripted. The externals are complete. However the first person is blank."

"Kennedy?"

"Yes. He is emerging as a very strong figure in the dreaming. But in this scene he's empty. I want you to amend the internals as he sexes with his mistress."

"Same old wet dream stuff?"

"Essentially. But in this case the explicit material is crucial to the concept. The character of Kennedy is seminal to an understanding of the twentieth century. All of his drives must be exposed. The underlying . . ."

"Yeah. Right. Let's talk about the money."

Yevil balanced the newly-discharged needle gun on his fingertips as he walked across the room, and dropped the weapon into the Household Disperse. Kurtz lay face down on the dreaming couch with a three inch dart in his brain. The tape was still running, although the Kurtz input was zero. Yeovil sucked his burned fingers. He would smear them better when he was finished with Kurtz.

He had never killed anyone before. He sadly discovered that dream was better than actual. Like sex. He stored the minor rush of emotions for future use.

The tape clicked through. The Household offed the recorder. Yeovil picked the subcutaneous terminals out of Kurtz's head and dropped them into their glass of purple. The whirlpool rinse sucked particles of Kurtz out of its system.

Yeovil went through Kurtz's smockpocks. A few credit cards and a bunch of ins. A couple of five-pound bits. They all went into the Disperse, along with Kurtz's outdoor gear, porno tapes, and finger-printed brandy glass. Do it, then clear up afterwards—the secret of criminal success.

The Household presented Yeovil with his outdoor kit: a visored hat, and a padded Inverness. The tailors boasted that their garments were proof against a fragmentation charge. That was true: in the event of such an unlikely weapon being turned on the cape, it would be unmarked. Anyone inside it, however, would find his torso turned to jelly by the impact. Most footpads used needle guns, anyway.

Yeovil hauled Kurtz out to his armoured Ford. On the street he fitted an outmoded breather. It kept the smog out of his lungs as well as a more stylish domino, and disguised him.

Yeovil pressed his car in, and tapped his ID into the automatic. The smog lights upped. The streets were deserted.

Yeovil drove around central London for fifteen minutes before chancing upon a suitable dump. He slung the body over several twist-tie rubbish bags in the forecourt of a condemned high-rise. It would look like an ordinary waylaying. There were probably five similar corpses within walking distance. If the Black Economists got to Kurtz before the Metropolitans, the body would be stripped of any usable organs. The incident would not rate a mention on the local.

Back at Luxborough Street Yeovil reprogrammed his Household to forget Kurtz's visit. He fed in a pleasurable dull evening at home, and wrote off the energy expenditure to various gadgets.

Then he slept. The next stage was complicated, and he did not want to deal with it late at night after his first murder. He felt a twinge of insomnia excitement, which he countered by backgrounding a subliminal lullaby.

The Household woke him early with a call. It was Tony, Yeovil's chief editor at *Futura*. Tony looked harrassed.

"You've overreached another deadline, John. I wanted the *JFK* master back yesterday. We're committed to a production start. And we have marketing to consider. It's a q-seller on advance sales, and you haven't delivered yet."

"Sorry." Yeovil stretched his mind around the problem. "I've still got a few more amendments."

"You're a trekkiehead, John. Leave it alone. I told you it was finished last week. I'm satisfied as is. And I'm supposed to be a bastard tyrannical editor. We're all expletive deleted here. The copiers are primed."

"You have my word as a gentleman that a definitive master will be on your desk tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning? I get into the office Kubricking early, John." Tony looked dubious. "Okay, you've got it, but no more extensions. No matter how many errors slip through the fine-tooth. You can have Oswald miss, and reselect the randy bugger for all I care. The next John Yeovil hits the stands Friday. Does that scan?"

"Of course. I apologise for the delay. I'm sure you understand . . ."

"If that means: will I forgive you for being an iridium-plated prick, no-way. However, my slice of your sales buys you a lot of tolerance. Ciao."

Tony over-and-outed. He was getting near termination. There were other publishers. Offers tapped up in Yeovil's slab every morning.

The Kurtz-assist master was still slotted. Yeovil pulled it, primed the duplicator, and cloned a copy. The master tape was too recognisable as such for his purpose. Too many splices and scribbles. Plus he would need it later. His plan did not include writing off the work done on *JFK*. The dream would be worth a lot of money. Yeovil doled himself out a shiver of self-delight.

He printed on the clone's spine: *JFK* by John Yeovil. And under that he scrawled: review copy.

Review copy. Yeovil backgrounded an aural of



Illustrated by Ian Sanderson

Richard Horton's review of his last dream. Just to remind himself what this was about.

"... Yeovil is lucky that his publishers have the clout to buy off his heroine's heirs, 'cause *The Private Life of Margaret Thatcher* is quite as unnecessary and unsavoury as his previous efforts. Yeovil is genned up on period externals, and has an insidious knack for conceiving his dreams so you zip through without being too annoyed. But once the headset is off, you know you've had a zilch experience. A few critics praise the man for his high-minded moral tone, but even they will find the ligasmacking prurience of Margaret Thatcher difficult to get their heads around. Yet again Yeovil bombards the captive mind with an endless round of sensuality—enormous state banquets, thrilling battles, icber-drenched 'tasteful' sexing—and finally condemns all the excesses he has dragged us through with such gloating relish. He is at his worst when his heroine submits to what he has her anachronistically think of as 'fate worse than death' under the well-remembered, much-maligned Idi Amin in order to save a plane load of hostages. One sympathises with the feminist group who have petitioned for Yeovil's judicial castration under the anti-sexism laws. Finally, the man's dreams are a far less interesting phenomenon than his publicity machine. If you're out there taking a rest from adding up the profits John, pack it in and join the Rural Reclamation Corps. With relief we turn to a new dream from Miss Susen Bishopric, who has made such an..."

Richard Horton was as smug a little shit as ever there was. Listening to his middle-aged parody of the adjectival overkill of a comput-assessor made Yeovil's

fingers twist his watch chain into flesh-pinch knots.

Yeovil could not decide which made him hate Richard Horton more. The Carol business, or his tridvid defamations. Carol Horton had been Yeovil's mistress for three months. Before he had elected to sever the bond, Carol had taken it upon herself to return to her husband. Moreover she had instituted a civil lawsuit against Yeovil, alleging that he had drawn upon copyrighted facets of her personality for Pristine, the protagonist of his *The Sweetheart of Tau Ceti*. When he thought about her Yeovil still disliked Carol, but only to prove a point. Deep down it was Horton's insulting reviews that lifted Yeovil's loathing into the superhate bracket.

Before leaving the house Yeovil vindictively erased all his Horton tapes.

Richard Horton was dreaming. He dreamed that he was John F. Kennedy. Or, rather he dreamed that he was John Yeovil jacking off while dreaming that he was John F. Kennedy. If Kennedy had been like the simile no one would now be around to review the dream. The Evans would have naked the world in desperation.

So far it had been the typical John Yeovil craptrap. The man never missed a chance to be cheap and obvious.

In the Oval Room JFK was sexing Marilyn Monroe. Why was it always Marilyn Monroe? Every dream set in the mid-twentieth century found it obligatory to have the hero sex Marilyn Monroe. The girl must have had a crowded schedule. The semiologically inclined comput-assessors called her an icon of liberated sen-

susly. Richard Horton called her a thundering cliché.

It was the regulation wet-dream stuff, a little harder than Yeovil's usual hypocritical lyricism. At least there were no butterflies and gentle breezes here. Just heavy-duty sexing. Another depiction of woman as a hunk of meat. Kubrick knows what Carol ever saw in Yeovil.

Horton's attention strayed around the scene. Perhaps he should feed the dream through the British Museum Library's researcher. It might catch Yeovil out on an external. It was probably not worth it. Yeovil was the kind of Dreamer who got every wallpaper tone and calendar date right and then hit you with a concept that would make a computer puke.

Yeovil had peppered the sexing with memories. The lanky git was pathetically pleased with himself. Look how much research I did, screamed a mass of largely irrelevant facts. WW II, Holy Joe Kennedy, Hyannis Port.

Who wrote Kennedy's inaugural address? That was out of character. Horton's dybbuk flinched from the white-out. There was another mind crowding in, superimposed on the Kennedy simile. It was not Yeovil, he was working overtime on having JFK remember who was topping the bill at the Newport, Rhode Island jazz festival in 1960. There was someone else. A strong mind Horton could not place. It was a contributory Dreamer. Was Yeovil trying to pirate again? Eclipsing a collaborator on the credits was not beneath him.

Horton felt himself getting lost in the dream. The fiction was broken, and he was disconcerted. For an instant he thought he actually was sexing Marilyn Monroe. The woman was screaming in his ear. After all these years, the real thing.

Then it was cartoon time. The JFK simile body stretched impossibly. The return of Plastic Man. There was a playback fault. That was it. Whoever had last dreamed through this copy had left an accidental overlay. Horton fished around for a name, but was dropped into a maelstrom of explosion imagery.

Was Yeovil experimenting with hard core? At least that would make a change.

Then the dream came together again, and Horton was locked in. Wedged between the minds of Yeovil, Kennedy and the mysterious Mr X.

Marilyn lay face down, exhausted, her hair fanned on the pile carpet. JFK traced her backbone with the presidential seal. Horton was disgusted to feel Catholic guilt flit through JFK's mind. Yeovil was piling on cliché as per usual.

"Jack," breathed Marilyn, "did you know there's a theory that the whole universe got started with a Big Bang?"

Yeovil's dialogue was always the pits.

Kennedy parted Marilyn's hair and kissed the nape of her neck. Horton felt a trekkiehead reply coming. Something hard at the base of the president's skull. A white hot needle in his head. A brief skin and bone agony (what was that about Oswald?), then nothing.

Horton was not Horton any more. Horton was not anybody any more. His mind had been wiped. Completely, as an eraser blanks a tape. Yeovil watched as the former Horton rolled on his side, retracting his arms and legs, wrapping himself into an egg.

The dreamtape was still running. Yeovil offed the machine, and pulled the clone tape. Elvis Kurtz had

been unknowingly generous. He had shared his death.

Yeovil freed Horton from his headset, and gently popped his contact lenses. They had been making him cry. No point in keeping up enmities from a previous incarnation.

Yeovil wondered how Carol would take to motherhood. She always had shown an inclination to sentiment over gurgling infants. Now she had a chance to be closely acquainted with one. Horton had a lot of growing up to do.

Yeovil dropped the tape into Horton's Disperse, and used the critic's in to gain access to his Household. He wiped the whole day. As an extra flourish, he wiped the entire Household memory. A little pointless mystification to obscure his involvement.

Now all he had to do was get back to Luxborough Street, wipe Kurtz off the master tape, give that to Tony, and wait for the returns. Do it, then clear up afterwards.

Tony had messaged in the Household trivid.

"I had a merry hell of a time overriding your Household, you bastard. But we didn't lend you company programmes for nothing. So you were spending the day putting a few final touches to the masterpiece were you? If so, you must be doing it in another dimension because the master is here and you aren't. Where the Jacqueline Susann are you? Actually, don't bother to tell me. I don't give a damn. I now have the JFK master, and that fulfills your contract. You can start looking for a new publisher. By the time you play this back we'll have a million copies in distribution, with an expected second impression on Monday. Don't worry, though. You won't have to sue us to get what's coming to you. Ciao."

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Kim Newman was born in London in 1959, and educated in Somerset and at the University of Sussex. Since graduating in 1980, he has been a starving author. He has written two musicals (*The Gold Diggers* of 1901, *The Roaring Eighties*), three plays (*Another England*, *My One Little Murder Can't Do Any Harm*, *Deep South*), and an assortment of articles, lyrics, jokes, and critiques for *Sheep Worrying*, the West Country alternative arts magazine. [The musicals and plays were produced by a small theatre group in that part of England.]

Currently, he is a freelance film critic, contributing regularly to *City Limits*, the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, and others. His first book, *Nightmare Movies*, a critical history of the horror film since 1968, will be published by Proteus in June 1984. He is working on four other film books, including a study of the films of Marilyn Monroe. "Dreamers" is his first published work of fiction.

He is also the lead vocalist, lyricist and kazoo-player with Club Whoopie, a vaudeville band.

STRANGE MEMORIES OF DEATH

Philip K. Dick

I woke up this morning and felt the chill of October in the apartment, as if the seasons understood the calendar. What had I dreamed? Vain thoughts of a woman I had loved. Something depressed me. I took a mental audit. Everything was in fact fine; this would be a good month. But I felt the chill.

Oh Christ, I thought. Today is the day they evict the Lysol Lady.

Nobody likes the Lysol Lady. She is insane. No one has ever heard her say a word and she won't look at you. Sometimes when you are descending the stairs she is coming up and she turns wordlessly around and retreats and uses the elevator instead. Everybody can smell the Lysol she uses. Magical horrors contaminate her apartment, apparently, so she uses Lysol. God damn! As I fix coffee I think, maybe the owners have already evicted her, at dawn, while I still slept. While I was having vain dreams about a woman I loved who dumped me. Of course. I was dreaming about the hateful Lysol Lady and the authorities coming to her door at five a.m. The new owners are a huge firm of real estate developers. They'd do it at dawn.

The Lysol Lady hides in her apartment and knows that October is here, October first is here, and they are going to bust in and throw her and her stuff out in the street. Now is she going to speak? I imagine her pressed against the wall in silence. However, it is not as simple as that. Al Newcum, the sales representative of South Orange Investments, has told me that the Lysol Lady wants Legal Aid. This is bad news because it screws up our doing anything for her. She is crazy but not crazy enough. If it could be proved that she did not understand the situation a team from Orange County

Mental Health could come in as her advocates and explain to South Orange Investments that you cannot legally evict a person with diminished capacity. Why the hell did she get it together to go to Legal Aid?

The time is nine a.m. I can go downstairs to the sales office and ask Al Newcum if they've evicted the Lysol Lady yet, or if she is in her apartment, hiding in silence, waiting. They are evicting her because the building, made up of fifty-six units, has been converted to condominiums. Virtually everyone has moved, since we were all legally notified four months ago. You have one hundred and twenty days to leave or buy your apartment and South Orange Investments will pay two hundred dollars of your moving costs. This is the law. You also have first refusal on your rental unit. I am buying mine. I am staying. For fifty-two thousand dollars I get to be around when they evict the Lysol Lady who is crazy and doesn't have fifty-two thousand dollars. Now I wish I had moved.

Going downstairs to the newspaper vending machine I buy today's *Los Angeles Times*. A girl who shot up a school yard of children "because she didn't like Mondays" is pleading guilty. She will soon get probation. She took a gun and shot school children because, in effect, she had nothing else to do. Well, today is Monday; she is in court on a Monday, the day she hates. Is there no limit to madness? I wonder about myself. First of all, I doubt if my apartment is worth fifty-two thousand dollars. I am staying because I am both afraid to move—afraid of something new, of change—and because I am lazy. No, that isn't it. I like this building and I live near



Illustrated by Roger Dean



friends and near stores that mean something to me. I've been here three and a half years. It is a good solid building with security gates and deadbolt locks. I have two cats and they like the closed patio; they can go outside and be safe from dogs. Probably I am thought of as the Cat Man. So everyone has moved out, but the Lysol Lady and the Cat Man stay on.

What bothers me is that I know that the only thing separating me from the Lysol Lady, who is crazy, is the mousy in my savings account. Money is the official seal of sanity. The Lysol Lady, perhaps, is afraid to move. She is like me. She just wants to stay where she has stayed for several years, doing what she's been doing. She uses the laundry machines a lot, washing and spin-drying her clothes again and again. This is where I encounter her: I am coming into the laundry room and she is there at the machines to be sure no one steals her laundry. Why won't she look at you? Keeping her face turned away...what purpose is served? I sense hate. She hates every other human being. But now consider her situation; those she hates are going to close in on her. What fear she must feel! She gazes about in her apartment waiting for the knock on the door; she watches the clock and understands!

To the north of us in Los Angeles the conversion of rental units to condominiums has been effectively blocked by the city council. Those who rent won out. This is a great victory but it does not help the Lysol Lady. This is Orange County. Money rules. The very poor live to the east of me: the Mexicans in their Barrio. Sometimes when our security gates open to admit cars the Chicano women run in with baskets of dirty laundry; they want to use our machines, having none of their own. The people who lived here in the building resented this. When you have even a little money—money enough to live in a modern, full-security, all-electric building—you resent a great deal.

Well, I have to find out if the Lysol Lady has been evicted yet. There is no way to tell by looking at her window; the drapes are always shut. So I go downstairs to the sales office to see Al. However, Al is not there; the office is locked. Then I remember that Al flew to Sacramento on the weekend to get some crucial legal papers that the state lost. He hasn't returned. If the Lysol Lady wasn't crazy I could knock on her door and talk to her; I could find out that way. But this is precisely the locus of the tragedy; any knock will frighten her. This is her condition. This is the illness itself. So I stand by the fountain that the developers have constructed, and I admire the planter boxes of flowers which they have had brought in...they have really made the building look good. It formerly looked like a prison. Now it has become a garden. The developers put a great deal of money into painting and landscaping and in fact rebuilding the whole entrance. Water and flowers and French doors...and the Lysol Lady silent in her apartment waiting for the knock.

Perhaps I could tape a note to the Lysol Lady's door. It could read:

Madam, I am sympathetic to your position and would like to assist you. If you wish me to assist you, I live upstairs in apartment C-1.

How would I sign it? Fellow loony, maybe. Fellow loony with fifty-two thousand dollars who is legally here whereas you are, in the eyes of the law, a squatter.

As of midnight last night. Although the day before, it was as much your apartment as mine is mine.

I go back upstairs to my apartment with the idea of writing a letter to the woman I once loved and last night dreamed about. All sorts of phrases pass through my mind. I will recreate the vanished relationship with one letter. Such is the power of my words.

What crap. She is gone forever. I don't even have her current address. Laboredly, I could track her down through mutual friends, and then say what? My darling, I have finally come to my senses. I realize the full extent of my indebtedness to you. Considering the short time we were together you did more for me than anyone else in my life. It is evident to me that I have made a disastrous error. Could we have dinner together?

As I repeat this hyperbole in my mind the thought comes to me that it would be horrible but funny if I wrote that letter and then by mistake or design taped it to the Lysol Lady's door. How would she react? Jesus Christ! It would kill her or cure her! Meanwhile I could write my departed loved one, die ferne Geliebte, as follows:

Madam, you are totally nuts. Everyone within miles is aware of it. Your problem is of your own making. Ship up, shape up, get your act together, borrow some money, hire a better lawyer, buy a gun, shoot up a school yard. If I can assist you I live in apartment C-1.

Maybe the plight of the Lysol Lady is funny and I am too depressed by the coming of autumn to realize it. Maybe there will be some good mail today; after all, yesterday was a mail holiday. I will get two days of mail today. That will cheer me up. What in fact is going on is that I am feeling sorry for myself; today is Monday and, like the girl in court pleading guilty, I hate Mondays.

Brenda Spenser pleaded guilty to the charge of shooting eleven people, two of whom died. She is seventeen years old, small and very pretty, with red hair; she wears glasses and looks like a child, like one of those she shot. The thought enters my mind that perhaps the Lysol Lady has a gun in her apartment, a thought that should have come to me a long time ago. Perhaps South Orange Investments thought of it. Perhaps this is why Al Newcum's office is locked up today; he is not in Sacramento but in hiding. Although of course he could be in hiding in Sacramento, accomplishing two things at once.

An excellent therapist I once knew made the point that in almost all cases of a criminal psychotic acting-out there was an easier alternative that the disturbed person overlooked. Brenda Spenser, for instance, could have walked to the local supermarket and bought a carton of chocolate milk instead of shooting eleven people, most of them children. The psychotic person actually chooses the more difficult path: he forces his way uphill. It is not true that he takes the line of least resistance, but he thinks that he does. There, precisely, lies his error. The basis of psychosis, in a nutshell, is the chronic inability to see the easy way out. All the behaviour, all that constitutes psychotic activity and the psychotic lifestyle, stems from this perceptual flaw.

Sitting in isolation and silence in her antiseptic apartment, waiting for the inexorable knock on the

door, the Lysol Lady had contrived to put herself in the most difficult circumstances possible. What was easy was made hard. What was hard was transmuted, finally, into the impossible, and there the psychotic lifestyle ends: when the impossible closes in and there are no options at all, even difficult ones. That is the rest of the definition of psychosis: at the end there lies a dead end. And, at that point, the psychotic person freezes. If you have ever seen it happen—well, it is an amazing sight. The person congeals like a motor that has seized. It occurs suddenly. One moment the person is in motion—the pistons are going up and down frantically—and then it's an inert block. That is because the path has run out for that person, the path he probably got onto years before. It is kinetic death. "Place there is none," St Augustine wrote. "We go backward and forward, and there is no place." And then the cessation comes and there is only place.

The spot where the Lysol Lady had trapped herself was her own apartment but it was no longer her own apartment. She had found a place at which to psychologically die and then South Orange Investments had taken it away from her. They had robbed her of her own grave.

What I can't get out of my mind is the notion that my fate is tied to that of the Lysol Lady. A fiscal entry in the computer at Mutual Savings divides us and it is a mythical division; it is real only so long as people such as South Orange Investments—specifically South Orange Investments—are willing to agree that it is real. It seems to me to be nothing more than a social convention, such as wearing matching socks. In another way it's like the value of gold. The value of gold is what people agree on, which is like a game played by children: "Let's agree that that tree is third base." Suppose my television set worked because my friends and I agreed that it worked. We could sit before a blank screen forever that way. In that case it could be said that the Lysol Lady's failure lay in not having entered into a compact with the rest of us, a consensus. Underlying everything else there is this unwritten contract to which the Lysol Lady is not a party. But I am amazed to think that the failure to enter into an agreement

palpably childish and irrational leads inevitably to kinetic death, to total stoppage of the organism.

Argued this way, one could say that the Lysol Lady had failed to be a child. She was too adult. She couldn't or wouldn't play a game. The element which had taken over her life was the element of the grim. She never smiled. No one had ever seen her do anything but glower in a vague, undirected way.

Perhaps, then, she played a grimmer game rather than no game: perhaps her game was one of combat, in which case she now had what she wanted, even though she was losing. It was at least a situation she understood. South Orange Investments had entered the Lysol Lady's world. Perhaps being a squatter rather than a tenant was satisfying to her. Maybe we all secretly will everything that happens to us. In that case does the psychotic person will his own ultimate kinetic death, his own dead-end path? Does he play to lose?

I didn't see Al Newcum that day but I did see him the next day; he had returned from Sacramento and opened up his office.

"Is the woman in B-15 still there?" I asked him. "Or did you evict her?"

"Mrs Archer?" Newcum said. "Oh, the other morning she moved out; she's gone. The Santa Ana Housing Authority found her a place over on Bristol." He leaned back in his swivel chair and crossed his legs; his slacks, as always, were sharply creased. "She went to them a couple of weeks ago."

"An apartment she can afford?" I asked.

"They picked up the bill. They're paying her rent; she talked them into it. She's a hardship case."

"Christ," I said. "I wish someone would pay my rent."

"You're not paying rent," Newcum said. "You're buying your apartment."

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Philip K. Dick died in March 1982. He was 53. The above story was probably written in 1979, and is due to appear in a collection entitled *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* which will be published by Doubleday in the USA in 1985. Paul Williams writes in the Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter, December 1983: "The book is made up of previously uncollected material from throughout PKD's career... The title is Philip K. Dick's original manuscript title for his award-winning 1980 Playboy story 'Frozen Journey'."

Other posthumous riches flow from the Dick Estate. This summer a novel called *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike* will appear in a hardcover edition from the small-press publisher Mark Ziesing (enquiries to him at PO Box 406, Wilmette, CT 06226, USA). Williams says: "This 1980 PKD mainstream novel takes place in Point Reyes Station, California, and is about Leo Runcible, 'a brilliant, civic-minded liberal Jew living in a rural WASP town in Marin County, California'. The quote is from PKD, circa 1981, the year in which he revised *Teeth* and decided it was a 'masterpiece' and asked his agent to try again to find a publisher for it."

An earlier unpublished Dick novel, *In Milton Lumsy Territory* (circa 1958), is also likely to appear before the end of 1984—from David Hartwell's Dragon Press, Pleasantville, New York. Meanwhile, Britain's Gollancz are due to publish *Lies, Inc.* (May, £7.95), a science-fiction novel which they say "has a curious history. It was first published in 1966 (as *The Unteleported Man*) but later it emerged that the text had been cut 'for commercial reasons' by more than half. Now, with the complete text restored, it emerges as an important addition to Philip K. Dick's body of work, with all the invention, humour and bizarre reality-shifts which have given him such a devoted following. As Brian Aldiss wrote, 'No other writer of his generation has such a powerful intellectual presence. He has stamped himself not only on our memories but in our imaginations'."

Readers who want to join the PKD Society and receive its informative newsletter should send \$5 to Paul Williams, PKDS, Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA. In Britain, membership costs £3.50 (surface mail) or £7 (air mail) from the P.K. Dick Society, c/o Ms V. Buckle, 47 Park Avenue, Barking, Essex IG11 8QU.

EXPERIMENT WITH TIME

M.J. Fitzgerald

Time ran out: I snatched the trilby and the long red woolen scarf from the entrance table and followed him into a blustery autumn air, shutting the door behind me and slipping the key into the pocket of the knickerbockers. He was running down the tree-lined avenue, kicking up a dust of brittle brown and yellow leaves. I could see the sole of his sandals; he jogged with his whole body bent forward at an almost dangerous angle to keep his balance, he held his knees close together and threw his shins and feet sideways. I would have no trouble catching up with him to demand an explanation, he obviously couldn't run much faster, impeded further by the black soutane which he held high with both hands; and I was in tip-top condition, barely using one third of my energy as I trotted in comfortable running shoes.

The wide avenue was asphalted, and the occasional Rolls, Bentley or Daimler came towards us, slowed down as Time passed them and gathered speed to pass me. I caught glimpses of dark-haired men and blonde women, and thought how glad I was not to be cooped up but running behind Time in the autumn air: a strong wind whipped the trees, the branches cringed and cried multicoloured leaves: the sky hid behind large comfortable clouds and the sun teased the earth and the tall white-washed houses on either side with its game of peek-a-boo. My lungs expanded, my pulse was steady; my heart beat regularly, if a fraction fast. My feet beat the pavement and crushed leaves with determination: for a minute I was even grateful to Time for dragging me out in pursuit of him.

A car appeared where the avenue narrowed on the horizon. It was quite small, a popular rather than an exclusive make. There was a trailer attached. When it was level it swerved on the road, and turned, drew up alongside me and parked a little ahead. I reached it as the door of the caravan opened and an exclusively dressed woman stepped on to the pavement. She smiled at me, removed a pin from her hair and let it tumble on

her shoulders, danced as she slipped out of her red and gold dress and she stood in front of me in a fur jacket, black stockings and high-heeled ankle boots, stretching out her hand to take mine and draw me in. I looked ahead. Time stood still, staring at me, a grin of mockery on his pink-cheeked, pudgy face. As I stepped in I saw him settle with his back against one of the trees and take out a book. He was odious.

The woman was beautiful and desirable and for a while I forgot Time waiting for me with his book.

The trailer shook with our energetic games: we were very close. So close I decided to tell her.

"I want to kill Time," I murmured into her soft hair as we lay in wonderful exhaustion.

"I know what you mean," she replied, and we began another more gentle game.

"He owes me an explanation," I explained to her afterwards.

"I know. He never explains to anyone," she said. She was so understanding and beautiful I wanted to play again. But I pulled myself up short.

"Time is now ripe. With your help I can beat him. I can kill him. We must draw up a plan of attack. Is he still there?"

She looked through the pale venetian blinds and leapt to her feet:

"No, no, shit fuck, he's gone!"

"Now we've lost him. What are we to do?"

It was childish, but I felt near to tears. To lose him, when I almost had him in my grasp. I couldn't help blaming her, and we quarrelled violently: the caravan shook as we threw plates and glasses at each other, then chairs and finally fought over the table. We were having a real tug of war when she suddenly slackened her hold on two of the legs. It hurled me backwards against the back-end of the trailer.

"Look," she shouted, pointing at the window just above me. There was Time flying past.

"Quick, we mustn't lose him again."

I jammed the trilby on my head and wrapped the scarf around my neck, and she slipped on her fur and boots.

"You're naked," she said as we stumbled out.

"Never mind that," I said looking around. "This is war, a war against Time," I shouted and took her hand as we caught a glimpse of him flying above the bare trees.

"He's not going to escape us. We'll catch him, we'll beat him, we'll kill him. We'll mark him, we'll have him at our disposal, he'll be at our beck and call."

"We'll waste him," she screamed.

We ran down the narrowing avenue, looking up at him. He dived and caved out maliciously ahead of us; he dived and came close to landing and then took off like a kite caught in a gust of wind: the black soutane had had so impeded his movement spread out, filled like a sail and lifted him high. I saw his laughing face, both innocent like a child being thrown in the air, and an old man leering, knowing. She stuck her tongue at him and hurled abuse as we ran. I was glad of her coarse yelling, though I could never have used such language. I saw again how beautiful and desirable she was and almost stopped. But I was chasing Time. I let go of her hand and heard her shouting still as I ran faster than I'd ever run in my life, to keep him in sight through the thinning branches. Until he gave one last mocking dip, like a bow, and disappeared into the thick carpet of winter clouds. I stood panting, cursing myself: I should have got him when he was running like a knock-kneed girl.

I must have run very fast and very far because when I looked around I was in a vast plain and the woman was nowhere to be seen. In the distance I could just distinguish the outline of stark trees of what might have been the avenue or may have been a wood. The snow was knee-deep and swirled against my legs in an icy breeze. It was cold; and I was naked save for the trilby and the red scarf. Time had exposed me to this: I'd find him, he'd regret everything he's done to me... Remembering that the way to survive the cold is to keep moving, I started to walk towards the only visible alteration in the landscape, and stopped when the cold had reduced me to a state beyond numbness, a state of complete indifference. If I couldn't somehow cover at least the most delicate member, I'd no longer care whether I did catch up with Time... Perhaps I could make a pair of trunks with the red scarf I had been fingering, uselessly wrapped around my neck? I passed it between my legs, holding one end in front, wound the rest once around my waist, tucked what I was holding inside the belt, and I had a breech-cloth. The scarf was so long that I could even wear the other end over the left shoulder, to afford it a measure of protection from the icy wind blowing from that direction. It was as well there was no longer any feeling in my feet: all I had to do was to force my legs to keep them moving.

Warmed a little by the clothing of my nakedness I walked on defiantly, thinking I'll catch up with Time if it kills me, and kill him. I'll kill the bastard, I'll beat him senseless. This refrain, repeated rhythmically in my brain, kept me going until I reached the edge of the wood. But it was hopeless: the wood was an extension of the desolation behind me, the trees dressed in

icicles, the shrubs buried in snow, and no sign of life.

The falling of night began to be accompanied by the silent fall of large flakes, which made the air a touch warmer, and my problem greater. Where could I shelter? Didn't mountain-climbers make hide-outs from packed snow? But my frozen fingers refused to obey me.

I leant against the side of a tree that was not covered in snow, and wept. I had let Time slip by, when I could have caught up with him. And Time was no more. Nor would I have another chance to seek him, bound to death by my foolish pursuit of him. If only I had been wearing the thick jumper and woollen knickerbockers. If only she was with me, with her warm fur and hot body...the running shoes...the soft thickness of the fur, so carelessly cast aside in our game...the sheltering caravan...the bed: it had blankets, though we had not needed them... Never to play games again. To die in an ice cold wood and all because of Time. The bastard, the bastard—I shook myself and opened my eyes. Just a little distance away, Time marched on, looking ridiculous with his black soutane trailing in the snow; but I couldn't laugh. He seemed unaware of me, absorbed like a child in a game. He goose-stepped steadily past me, deep into the wood, and I shut my eyes.

I woke as if the thought, must find Time, had been an electric shock, and sat up: I was in a low bed, in a low-roofed room that smelt of baking bread. I could hear rain crashing on the roof and gurgling in the gutter, and a more distant roar, as if there was a river near by. The darkness was lit by the fire of a large oven. A shadow moved back and forth in front of it.

"I must find Time," I said. My voice had gone, what came out was a croak.

"No," the shadow said as she came near me.

"Eat," she said, handing me a loaf.

But my fingers could not grasp the bread.

"Frostbite," she said and sat on the bed. She was an old woman, wrapped in shawls, her face inscribed with lines. When she smiled I saw she was toothless, but her eyes were bright. She broke the bread and fed me as long as my stiff jaws allowed me to chew. I lay back exhausted as she stepped back to the oven, returned with a cup of hot water: gently she held my head in her gnarled hand and the cup close to my lips. I sipped, drank thirstily, ate a little more bread.

"Thank you," I croaked.

"Sleep," she said. And I slept.

The chatter of birds woke me. Sunlight poured in from the one window and danced on the floor from the wide open door next to the oven. I looked around but I was alone. I tried to get up: it was as if parts of my body were no longer there. All feeling had gone from the fingers except the thumb and forefinger of the left hand: the feet were senseless stumps. This damage Time had done to me. How I hated him. Yet even as I thought I found I had no strength to hate. I had no strength at all, and could only lie feebly waiting for her return.

"My scarf," I said when her shadow darkened the doorway.

"Yes. And your hat." She beamed her toothless smile and I was stirred by its tenderness. She rummaged under the bed and took out my dusty possessions, fed me bread: weak tears streamed down my face, and she wiped them away with her rough fingers, in silence.

She was extraordinarily comforting.

"Don't fight against Time," she chanted as I was falling asleep once more.

"No," I mumbled.

"Spare Time," she rocked me in my sleep, "and you will find him and keep him."

"Serve Time," she sang as she fed me bread while I learnt to use the two fingers that had not died, "and you will have the fullness of him."

"Take Time," was her lay as she led me to the river. Cuckoo's called in the wood, and I followed her on my knees, wearing the trilby, with the long red scarf around my neck, dragging the stumps that had once been feet and shins.

"And he'll be your very own sweet Time, without end," she murmured as we sat by the bank and looked on the water: Time flowed by on his back, weighed down by the saturated black soutsans, and on his face the mischievous smile of a child.

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Maria Fitzgerald lives in London, teaching Italian at a grammar and literature at the City University and various other Adult Education Institutes. She is preparing a volume of short stories for publication and working on a novel. Prior to the above piece, she has had just two short stories published, one in the Penguin anthology *Fleabird 2* and one in *Granita*.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

A selection of brand new stories by Brian Aldiss, Thomas M. Disch, Garry Kilworth and others. Also, book reviews by Mary Gentle — and exciting art work. If your subscription expires with this issue please renew promptly to ensure that you receive the Autumn 1984 *Interzone*.

WE ANNOUNCE A COMPETITION

for the best science-fiction short story submitted to us by the year's end. Prize: a lifetime subscription to *Interzone*, and publication in the magazine with payment at our usual rates. See the editorial in this issue for further details of what we are looking for.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of *Interzone* from No. 1 (Spring 1982) are still available from 21 The Village Street, Leeds, LS4 2PR — although supplies of some numbers are now running low. They are £1.50 each, but readers who buy three or more issues may have them at £1.25 each. (£1.75 each overseas, or £1.50 each for three.) Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to *Interzone*. Contents of back issues:

- I_Z 1 — M. John Harrison, John Sladek, Angela Carter, Keith Roberts, Michael Moorcock
- I_Z 2 — J.G. Ballard, Alex Stewart, Andrew Weiner, Rachel Pollack, Thomas M. Disch
- I_Z 3 — Garry Kilworth, Angela Carter, Josephine Saxton, Nicholas Allan, David S. Garnett
- I_Z 4 — John Sladek, Alex Stewart, David Redd, Malcolm Edwards, Andy Souter, Barrington J. Bayley
- I_Z 5 — Scott Bradfield, Richard Cowper, John Crowley, John Shirley, M. John Harrison
- I_Z 6 — Cherry Wilder, Neil Ferguson, John Hendry, Lorraine Sintetos, Keith Roberts, plus illustrated feature by Roger Dean.
- I_Z 7 — Geoff Ryman, Bruce Sterling, Michael Blumlein, plus "comic strip" by Margaret Welbank.

McGONAGALL'S LEAR

BY ANDY SOUTTER

Cornelia spent her 30th birthday at home in Frankfurt, and had a small gathering of friends to celebrate. Ingo gave her a copy of a Canadian novel called *Surfacing*. Wolfgang gave her a card with a picture of a mallard duck in glorious plumage. "Aren't the males always more beautiful?" he laughed. Rolf was a western fan and turned the TV on to find a barroom scene, and he immediately shut everyone up—it was a big scene for some reason. In the saloon an angry young man seemed to have it in for a couple of older men sitting eating at a table some distance away. Quivering with rage the young man banged on the bar counter with his pistol butt. As the bartender gave him a whisky a hush descended. Only the musicians played on. "Shut up!" shouted the young man and they did. He took a slug of whisky and slowly approached the two older men, who just carried on with their stew as if nothing had happened. Twice the young man screamed at them to get up and face him, but was met with no response. Then one of the older men, still not looking up from his plate, gave the young man some advice which was obviously good and penetrating, including a number of home truths and the clarification of certain consequences if the young man were to carry on being so rash. Finally, slowly, the young man lowered his gun, bestien, and returned to the bar. Then he shouted at everybody—what were they staring at, why didn't they carry on where they left off. The music restarted, the barroom's life picked up again. Rolf turned the TV off and told everybody to carry on.

Presley was dreaming of his new toy when the plane hit bad weather over southeast England—this bumped him into queasy consciousness in the following stages: i) the picture of Ingrid's crotch on the screen, ii) dark hair curling round the edges of the white cotton briefs and turning into thunderclouds, iii) his own face appearing on the white cotton, iv) the storm ravaging his face, and v) the voice of God thun-

dering out SERGEANT PRESLEY. It was a woman's voice, too.

A woman soldier was bending over him: "Brought you a soda to calm your insides, sir."

"Thanks Mary Jane. Hey, where's Sara Jo?"

"Up front with Barbara Anne."

"How about that."

The rest of the men on the aircraft were slumped and dozing. From along the aisle came "Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me..."—Sara Jo's thin voice.

"Why's everyone asleep?" said Presley.

"We're over England, sir." The plane pitched violently. "That was some party too last night—and where did you disappear so early with that movie camera of yours?"

Presley reached out to tweak her nose but she smiled and avoided him. He frowned and said, "We ain't landing in England Mary Jane are we?"

"God willing, no. Refuelling in Scotland, then next stop Statnside." She sniffed the air. "Say, you been eating french fries?"

"Not the way my guts are feeling." Presley's long lashes fluttered and he looked down at his lap where a copy of *Guns 'n' Ammo* lay. Under Mary Jane's cap a hairpin glistened against tightly slicked blonde hair. She beamed and said, "I'd love to eat a french fry," then she adjusted her cap, swivelled neatly around and walked off up the aisle. Presley watched her go. She looked so cute but she was real tough. Too knowing. He lifted the magazine and peeked at the wet stain on his pants.

McGonagall, a gaunt and ageing Scot, sat brooding one late September in a tiny hut on a Kentish hop farm. He was recalling the previous night's tragedy when a crowd of Australians had got extremely drunk and managed to drive six tractors into the river. He stared at the wall: THIS IS THE CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD someone had written, and below BLESS

THE LOTUS FEET OF THE GURU MAHARAJI. Rain battered the tin roof as McGonagall came to a decision. It was the usual one: to move on. All his life he had been a traveller; an actor, a musician and a poet—riding the blinds across North America before the war, from Wobbly demos in New York to the California grape harvest (where he had met Chavez and B. Traven and travelled down to Mexico and beyond); in Spain in the thirties, wounded fighting for the Republic, and later giving a performance before thousands in the blatant heat of the Madrid Corrida (he had seen the Caudillo's sunglasses flash from the royal box), when at half time as the fire truck came on to hose the ring McGonagall had leaped onto the sand and given an impromptu and ballistic version of his poem "Don Quixote", brandishing his coat at the truck; and in England shortly after that with the People's Theatre of King's Cross, playing in Brecht's tragic teaching plays on streetcorners. Then the Hitler war came and McGonagall had left Britain, never to return until now. Now, something unnameable was calling him home.

McGonagall picked up his bags, went out and collected his pay, then made his way to the village pub where the gypsies were in with their bull terriers, the local ciderhead was blissed out in the corner he had occupied for forty years, and a person dressed all in orange was playing darts with a wiry little kid from Shankhill in Belfast. McGonagall strode to the bar in his old dark suit and bought a large gin.

Many gins later as the pub began to empty he had his arm around a young student and was finishing a declamation with "...in your land and my land/The world is just one Three Mile Island."

Applause, barking.

Then he walked outside with the student, who disappeared to the lavatory. On the road a truck driver was checking his load. In an instant McGonagall had forgotten the student and had himself a lift to London, and as the truck pulled out and approached the main road junction he told the driver "I was born at a crossroads, Dundee. Brought up in a house there. Used to sit and watch the accidents." The driver thought about this as the truck gathered speed and the St Christopher pendant swung from the cab roof.

Iane was speaking to her in earnest. "It's only a matter of time before they haul you off too."

"So he stayed in my apartment—so he kept some of his stuff there—so what? He's my brother."

"All the more reason to connect you with the business," said Wolfgang.

"These people don't need excuses anymore. Direct Action is more out of fashion than ever."

"Since they've been holding him, what's happened to you already?"

"From University to Gymnasium to six year-olds."

"They'll have you teaching poodles next."

"And you're not even in the party."

They told her to leave the country for a while, they gave her some addresses, but she would not make a decision.

Prestwick airport had a small departure lounge which was now filled with a plane load of GI's. Presley was playing cards with Ben, Bob and Bill, and he was losing: "How much longer we going

to be stuck here?"

"Rock on the weather won't let up till morning."

"I ain't sleeping in this place."

"Got no choice, soldier."

Presley gave a petulant scowl, got up and gathered the cards.

"—Hey! I had a good hand there," said Ben.

"They're my cards," said Presley as he pocketed them and wandered over to the refreshment bar.

"He's nervous I would say," said Bill. "No Buddy Holly jokes now people."

The bar had just closed and the serving girl was headed out the exit. Accompanied by whistles from his companions, Presley followed her out, caught up with her in the corridor and blocked her path.

"Hey now," said Presley, smiling. "Too bad you closed up so early. Do you know who I am?"

"A Yank."

"Name's Presley, miss..."

"Janet Anne." She tried to get past him but he stopped her.

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"It's what they all say."

"Take a longer look," he said, and she did.

"Cigarette? American ones honey." She took one, still staring as he lit it for her. "Hey, is there anywhere we can be alone for a while? C'mon honey."

She led him to an empty staff room, and there they sat down as Presley started asking her about her family.

The truck pulled into a lorry park at Kings Cross. Walking through backstreets in search of a cheap

B & B, he came upon a church: what drew him to its doorway was the sound of "Chopsticks" being played on the great organ. From the porch he could see a circle of women sitting before the altar and talking: they all wore black face masks. Two women were in the pulpit practising Tai Chi. Another was washing a nappy in the font. McGonagall started in but a masked wooman blocked his path. "You can't come in. We're occupying the church."

"Who are you?" said McGonagall.

"Prostitutes," said the masked prostitute.

McGonagall offered his hand. "I am William McGonagall of Dundee."

"Hey, I've heard of you," she said.

After talking for a while in the porch, McGonagall finally went home with one of the women and slept on her sofa till morning when she came to wake him with a cup of tea. As she approached she heard him mumbling in his sleep: "...For the prostitutes and students of Yorkshire it was a terrible time! When Sutcliffe the Ripper roamed abroad to perpetrate his crime! He would creep up on his light feet and attack them from behind! Molest them, disembowel them, and around their throats the entrails wind! Everybody was relieved, especially the poor whores! When this murderous lorry driver was put behind locked doors! It was the seventh day of June in the year of seventy-nine...or was it eight..."

She woke him. "You're not very subtle," she said.

While Cornelia was waiting for her kids to copy a map from the blackboard she looked out the window. She saw a BMW draw up to the front of the school and two men in trenchcoats emerge. She

recognised them instantly as those who had come for her brother and who had also interrogated her until the following morning. She told the kids to be good and left the room. Down the corridor Jurgens' P.E. class was in session. She found the staff changing room and saw Jurgens' clothes on the bench: brown shirt, brown cords, fawn jacket. She half expected a sweatshirt under the lapel. Kicker boots. She quickly undressed and put his clothes on. A good fit. On with his cap. Outside she passed the two plainclothesmen making for her classroom: they didn't look twice at her. Carrying her own clothes in an Adidas bag she left the building. She checked Jurgens' wallet and went to his address. The clothes she wore were sweaty and nauseated her a little. His flat smelled the same. Old copies of *Bild* everywhere and a picture of Franz-Josef Strauss on the wall. She quickly found his passport and left.

Janet Anne had finished off Presley's hip flask and now she was slumped in her chair and giggling. "None of my friends will believe me," she said.

"Got my camera here," said Presley. "let's take some pictures to prove it. There's a remote cord." He set the camera up. "Come and sit by me."

"On your lap?"

"No, next to me here."

Smile. Click. Smile. Click.

Presley got up. "Now I'm going to take some soles of you, Janet Anne. Smile please."

Pose. Click. Pose. Click. Pose. Click.

"You got beautiful legs, baby. Can we get them fully in the picture?"

Janet lifted her kirtle green a bit above her knee and Presley snapped.

"Bit more honey. Beautiful." Click. "Look up at the ceiling." Those panties—they were white too. Presley put his hands down his pants and started to rub himself. "Don't look down now." But she did and she saw him. "Shall I take my knicks off?"

"No," said Presley sharply, but the girl just laughed and hooked her fingers around the waistband. "Don't do that!" he shouted angrily and took a step towards her. She pulled her pants down: Presley saw the golden triangle and flinched. "Don't do that!" he shouted again and struck her face, then drew back as she started to scream. "Honey—" He took a step toward her again but that triangle was scaring him so much that he couldn't get near. Janet Anne sat there, knuckles round her knees, hands gripping the side of the chair, shrieking and wailing as a cut opened up above her eye. He pleaded with her but she was oblivious. He backed toward the door and opened it. MP's were hurrying down the passage. Presley turned tail and rushed out of the building as they shouted at him to stop. A staff car was parked on the tarmac, the driver leaning against the side dozing. Presley jumped in and drove off at speed as the MP's ran for their jeeps.

The prostitute was polite but distant. The house in Goldington Street was a squat and she offered McGonagall a room upstairs that was free. He accepted, and decided to look for some gigs. He got by. October turned to November and he took to the streets on the fourth in a ragged suit with a large rosary around his neck. Slumped against a wall at

Charing Cross between a portrait artist and a drunk he opened with: "It was a terrible dark day in January sixteen hundred and five/ When poor Guy Fawkes was hung drawn and quartered whilst still alive/ A penny for his tortured karma burning forever like our memories of Hiroshima/ For he should have our sympathies and so possibly likewise should Yukio Mishima/ Who suffered in a similar way for his dissidence/ And to these matters we should not show diffidence..."

He moved from image to image along the rosary as he spoke. When he had the price of a half bottle of gin he moved on.

Then the poppy sellers appeared on the streets, under grey skies and tepid rain from the southeast. To McGonagall England had the look of the end of the line. After all there was nowhere left to go. There was a woman in Santiago but his bones were too old for such a trip. He had a publisher in Maputo but it was too hot down there. Now this was the month of the Drowned Dog, the Burning Catholic and the Great War. Down the sidewalk some kids grabbed a poppy seller's collection box and raced off as the man put down his tray and gave chase. McGonagall helped himself to fistfuls of paper poppies and muttered "Opiates". As he strode away he turned his face to the sky but it only made his eyes sore.

Cornelia took a train into Holland and caught the night ferry to England. She went to sleep in an aircraft seat below a large TV screen showing a map of Europe and Asia, and red arrows curving out from Soviet ports and moving across the northern oceans, getting fatter as they lengthened. At dawn she stood on the rail as the ferry slid up the Thames Estuary past a wreck ringed with wailing buoys, its masts poking up through the water and the mist. A crewman said it had lain there packed with megatons of explosives since 1946. Cornelius asked when they would reach Loch Ness. "Sheerness," said the man. On the London train she sat and watched a crisp packet slowly expand in a flooded ashtray.

After Presley had driven into the hills for some hours with no sign of his pursuers he steered off the road into a clump of pines and checked the vehicle's contents. There was a holdall containing civilian clothes and a handgun among other items. Presley changed his uniform for the civvies before settling back in his seat for some sleep.

He woke at dawn and gazed out from the copse over a bracken filled glen to a purple mountain beyond. He'd been on exercise recently out of Frankfurt, where the scenario had been a rearguard action after the Russians had taken Germany and forced NATO command back to Britain. They'd had to treat everyone they met as an enemy or a potential one. The terrain here was similar. A heron flew overhead. Presley unwrapped a chocolate bar and chewed it slowly. Then he heard a twig crack and looked around: a couple of jeeps had pulled up quietly on the road and now four MP's were fanning out as they approached the car. Presley pulled out the handgun and shot three of them down; the other disappeared. He slipped out of the passenger door and headed into the glen.

As he waited for his spot at a cabaret in a room above a pub in Clapham, McGonagall watched the acts come and go compered by a man in a pencil moustache called Derek Coupon. He thought he was seeing all the old battles being sung, danced and ranted. What was the point? Nothing had changed in five thousand years. People were more resigned than ever to just making money. Whenever spoken to by a young admirer he leaned back on his charisma, faintly smiling, with the odd grunt for yes or no, toking on a gin bottle and adjusting the garland of poppies that encircled him.

When his turn came he stumbled tragically into the light and groaned:

"Howl, howl, ye men of stone
My family has left me to die
Of hypothermia and all alone
All crowned with bloody opiates
My capitalist sons-in-law
Are carving up the world with their paranoid lorn
Dear Cordelia is on the run, of all bereft
So fall, bombs, upon my withered head
Implode my withered breath."

He stood silent for a moment, swaying, then continued:

"All my life I've travelled far around
Winning and losing the same old ground
Only my Queen can save us now
People look up to her still, anyhow
To her I shall make my plea
And since I hear at the moment she is in Scotland's
country
I shall travel there, arouse her and plead my cause,
be it ever so far
Even if I must beg, borrow, or steal a car."

And he stumbled off to applause, refusing Coupon's efforts to bring him back.

McGonagall had returned to his room; and the next morning he was at the station buying a ticket for Perth and reserving a seat. At a fruit stall he picked out an apple but there was no-one to take his money and he had no change. There were whistles—his train was leaving—so he pocketed the apple and raced away and aboard. For the duration of the trip he sat mute and sober (the bar was closed), listening to a group of soldiers swapping stories of the Hong Kong war.

From Perth he took a bus to Braemar, by which time it was evening. Then he travelled the twelve miles to Balmoral on foot, finally crossing the little bridge over the Dee to reach the castle.

Here slept a policeman in a porter's lodge; McGonagall passed by and took stock of the castle. In an upper window a single light glowed. He went in through the front entrance. Nobody about. Dimly lit halls and passages. McGonagall found his way to the upper apartments and was presently outside a heavy door which let out a tiny glow from its keyhole. After glancing through the keyhole he knocked; a voice bade him enter and he did so. The Queen looked up from where she sat on a chaise longue in a woollen dressing-gown. She peered over the top of her glasses and said in her brittle voice, "Who are you? You look like the ghost of John Brown."

"Foetidly I'm no a-mouldering yet milady, though 'tis but a matter of time, I regret," said McGonagall.

He took apple from his right pocket and transferred it to his left like a cricket umpire. "I am William McGonagall of Dundee. Poet and Tragedian, and I have some important matters to talk to you about, matters that rage in my head. Unannounced I come, for all your servants are abed."

The Queen had lowered her copy of *Guns 'n' Ammo* and was gazing abstractedly at a video of a dividing amoeba. She switched it off with her remote panel, at the same time pushing a button on it to summon a servant. "Tell your Queen all about it," she said, and patted the chaise longue.

"The world is awash with woe," he began, "and about this there are things you should know. You have not controlled your brood. Your sons are soldiers and paedophiles; your daughters toy bitterly with their food; terrible examples. Broadcast to the nation as its true spiritual leader: call for an end to the futile war with China. You could change the world radically by your acts. These, your majesty, are the facts."

"Nonsense. I simply have a tedious job to do, like everyone else."

"You must come out for proportional representation," said McGonagall.

"What on earth is that?" said the Queen.

"And space exploration. Britain also needs a new industrial and economic base. Then abdicate. Help start communes on your old estates. You'd lose some old friends. I can't deny, but you'd gain valuable new ones by and by. You'd be able to let your hair down more often too—I'm sure it would suit. Apple?"

He offered her a bite of the fruit. As she chewed, he continued: "The only real decisions you'd have to make would be which decisions to leave to chance—I was born at a crossroads so I know about accidents and decisions in advance."

Finally two servants arrived with a castle policeman. Everyone was polite and McGonagall was escorted out. The Queen lay back and watched amoebas again. Such a tedious job, she thought.

A herd of red deer were gathered by a burnside where a stag was having his way with a small hind. The monarch's bellow carried downwind and a mile up the hill to where Presley watched through binoculars as he lay on his stomach in the heather. He'd been out on the hill for some weeks now, sheltering under cairns and in caves, trapping hares, always on the move, always unseen. There had been no sign of his enemies since the shootout. He always moved upwind, and his senses were sharpening rapidly; already he could smell a dog or a Landrover from miles off. Now the wind changed and the deer scented him and moved rapidly out of sight. Presley made no attempt to follow but struck out towards higher country unknown to him. He was thinking it was time he settled down.

McGonagall passed the remaining hours of the night in the police cell at Braemar. As he slept a detective called up the Hendon computer and saw McGonagall's index appear as a solitary item to wit that someone answering his description had been seen to steal an apple at Kings Cross station the previous day. Next morning McGonagall was before a magistrate. The half-eaten apple was produced. Mc-

Gonagall pleaded guilty to its theft and made a brief statement saying surely he should be tried at the scene of the crime in the London Borough of Camden rather than the Castleton of Braemar. The prosecution produced a psychiatrist who said that in her view someone who stole an apple and then travelled hundreds of miles to give it to the Queen was clearly dangerous and criminally insane; and she recommended McGonagall be committed indefinitely to an asylum. Half an hour later he was in a prison van that snaked its way into the mountains. After a long drive the van turned up a steep track that wound its perilous way up the side of an immense gorge, at whose summit stood a dirty old castle built of granite, its turrets covered in great scabs of ivy. McGonagall was driven beneath its gates and there delivered.

Duly processed, he lay alone in a stone cell. They had shaved off his wild beard but let him keep his hair and also his suit, which had been reckoned close enough to the regulation outfit to save on extra cloth. It was night, and through a high slit window he saw the moon ride like a ghostly missile through stormy clouds. As he drifted into sleep, memories of other jails clustered before him: Pietermaritzburg 1919 (When he had been taken for an Indian); New York 1953 ("Are you now or have you ever been...?"); Torremolinos 1938 (one of Franco's concentration camps); Bow St 1931 (theft of a chocolate bar). Barring the previous night he had escaped from every one, and he intended to keep this record intact.

In the morning a warder led McGonagall away to a neon-lit cell block where he was to be initiated into his daily duties. In front of the first cell the warder produced a master key and unlocked the door, telling McGonagall to watch carefully as he took two paces in to confront a naked and shaven-headed man who took his hands from between his legs and spread his limbs wide, looking up with joy from his bed. The warder took a small handful of talc from the bucket he carried and tossed it over the man's crotch, then retreated and relocked the door. "Two steps in, one small handful, then out. There's another 48. When you've finished, start again. Ring for more powder." McGonagall repeated these instructions and was given the bucket and key. The warder left and he began his task. Down the passage a thin voice was singing "Heartbreak Hotel".

This experience might have had some kind of socio-political interest for McGonagall had he been a younger man, but now it simply bored him, and some days later he saw his chance during exercise in the castle yard. A delivery van had drawn up there and the driver had gone off with a package. In a trice McGonagall had leaped across and into the van, and driven out of the gates before the alarm could be raised. He drove frantically down the zigzagging pass, looking back to see it finally vomit forth a posse of men and dogs. He drove wildly on before taking a hairpin too fast, skidding across the road and overturning. Barrels of talcum powder bounced out of the stricken vehicle, splitting open and covering the road with the sickly dust. At least that should put the dogs off awhile, he thought as he crawled from the wreck bruised but unharmed and scrambled off onto the mountains.

As evening came down he felt no longer in danger and slackened his pace. His thoughts turned to shelter

as he breasted a summit and looked down across a desolate glen. He could see a huge tarn from which a river ran out and across a flat expanse of moorgrass before dropping steeply into the glen. He made for the rockface at the back of the tarn, but as he approached he suddenly stopped and stared. Something wasn't right. Just ahead of him there seemed to be some large object buried in the brush. He came closer. He parted some piled-up vegetation. He saw a dim glow come from a porthole in a metal bulkhead that was painted up in camouflage. Through this porthole McGonagall saw a middle-aged and dark-haired man shaving his face by the puny light of a candle. McGonagall was by what appeared to be a door, so he knocked and waited. After a sudden, short interval the door slowly opened and the two men were face to face. "Good evening," said McGonagall, "I am William McGonagall, Poet and Tragedian of Dundee."

"Are you saved?" said the man in a Tennessee drawl.

McGonagall put his hand to his face and gingerly felt the stubble.

"Are you saved?" the man repeated.

McGonagall wasn't too sure because he saw that the man was pointing a gun at him. "Possibly, sir," he said.

"Because I'm telling you unsaved people don't have any means of deliverance." The man paused. "Get in here now."

He found himself inside the fuselage of an aircraft with German markings. The smell was foul. A number of hares, grouse, and other small creatures hung from the roof, maturing. The man wore an old tweed suit and a pair of army boots, and just stood there staring at McGonagall, who surmised that he was in the presence of a solitary hunter-gatherer. Finally McGonagall cleared his throat and said, "The tyranny of the open night is too rough to endure."

"Then why don't you warm up in your cold bed." And he pointed to a metal bunk. McGonagall sat on it, saying "What happened to you, sir? Did you give all to your daughters to come to this?"

"What kind of shit are you talking? Tell you something though: shit, that's what the Devil gave me. Led me through fire and flood and whirlpool, led me over bogs and quagmires. Then he put knives in my pillows..."

"Cordelia put telephones in mine," interjected McGonagall, "they gave me expensive dreams."

"...he poisoned my food and he made me proud. I rode in a limo and I didn't trust my own shadow. I was licentious. I made blunders."

The hermit saw McGonagall look inquisitorily at a deck of cards that lay on his bed, and he said "I hope you don't play cards."

"No sir I don't." Replied McGonagall.

"Good, 'cause that's my bible you're looking at."

The hermit had spread out his cards and McGonagall had dutifully prayed with him before falling quickly and deeply asleep, exhausted by his endurance... When he awoke there was no sign of the man. Outside the sun was high. In the aircraft's cockpit all looked untouched and intact; a crucifix hung above the windscreen; there was a log book, too, entered in German, last date 1941. That was all he understood of it apart from a name, Hess. Now that rang a bell which

tolled miserably in McGonagall's dusky memory—some novelist or other? As he pondered on this his host appeared in the doorway with a couple of hares on his belt. McGonagall gave him an inquiring look—"Not your name—Hess—I suppose?"

"No sir, name's Aaron." He strung up the two hares before taking some pieces of smoked flesh from a box. "I hope you'll take some repast with me." And he said a short grace. McGonagall looked distastefully at the meat. "I don't suppose," he said, "you take any fish from the burn?"

The hermit chewed a while before intoning: "And he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters, and all the waters turned to blood, and the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank." Exodus chapter seven verses twenty and twenty-one. Here."

McGonagall took the meat offered him. He looked harder at the man. He was sure he knew that face. "Don't I know you, though? From Germany perhaps? I was on tour. Was it '59?"

"East or west?"

"Stuttgart, Frankfurt...west."

"Glad to see you got the hell out before the reds took over, friend. Can't say I recall you, though." The hermit finished eating and wiped his mouth as he rose to leave. "Got some more traps to check out. Won't be too long. Pray with me before you leave." He went out. McGonagall was glad to leave his meal unfinished, but nevertheless he felt his bowels move and stepped outside for the task. The wind blew in his face and refreshed him after that stinking interior. As he squatted he heard a faint, distant sound. He stared to the far peaks: there was something moving up there. His sharp eyes perceived a group of men and dogs, but there were no beaters and the hounds were Alsatians. McGonagall's thoughts raced as he froze for a second. Then he leaped up and went about his task; he ripped away the gorse and brushwood that hid the plane and frantically dug out the wheels from where they were embedded. The hermit came running: "It's the Devil and his red-eyed hounds of Hell," he shouted. "Not the first time they've showed around here but this time they've got a bead on us. Where's my '45, and what the hell are you doing?"

"Get in the plane," said McGonagall with all the authority he could muster, "and turn the fuel on."

"Yes sir," said the hermit.

The craft was more or less in one piece. A wheel strut was out of shape and the fuselage was a little twisted but McGonagall thought nothing of it as he jumped up and heaved the propeller blade down. The engine turned over with a couple of oily phunts. The dogs were nearly upon them and the men were leveling rifles; the hermit returned fire from the cockpit. McGonagall tried again: a longer series of oily phunts; and then a third time, which brought the engine to life with a vengeful roar. McGonagall jumped aboard and grabbed the controls. He'd only flown an aircraft once before—a crop sprayer in Oklahoma—and he forced his knowledge to return from this occasion. The aircraft lurched, but would not move off. Then it lurched again and something freed itself. McGonagall gave it the throttle and it began to clatter and rumble down the gentle slope towards where the burn disappeared over a sheer drop. Faster and faster it went, finally outpeeing the Alsatians who were running beside it.

then it reached the cliff edge and tumbled over. McGonagall gave a desperate wrench of the jammed-up joystick together with full throttle, and the plane suddenly pulled out of its abyssal dive and soared up into the blue. The hermit emptied his gun at the rapidly shrinking figures staring up from below.

Cornelia went directly to an address in Scotland—a boathouse on a remote and vast loch where she became the guest of Wolfgang's friend Alice. In the room where her late father had written an occult classic called *Do Before Ye Wilt*, Alice was engaged in editing his diaries. Cornelia was glad to cast off Jurgens' clothes and help with typing. This went on for some days of tempestuous weather that brought rotten trees crashing down around them and storms that obscured the loch; but when the weather changed, the sky cleared and the loch's calm surface turned a dazzling turquoise. Alice took Cornelia out skin diving to experience a lake killed by acid rain, and they rowed out to the middle of the desolate waters. Since there was only one aquabat between them, Cornelia went over the side first.

The battered Heinkel climbed serenely into the blue as its two occupants watched moor and mountain shift slowly beneath them.

"We're flying out of Egypt's land," said the hermit. He looked at McGonagall with fervour and asked "Is this...the final flight?" His long lashes fluttered, first at McGonagall, then at heaven.

"What?" shouted McGonagall against the noise of the engine, his eyes fixed ahead.

"I said, where are you taking me sir?"

"To Cordelia in Germany. She is our only hope."

"The bell she is," shouted the hermit. "that's the Devil's own country now. Supreme Command re-treated."

McGonagall stole a sideways glance and saw the man's hands tighten on his gun. Some nut was all he needed now. So he shouted confidentially:

"Str—"

"What?"

"Wouldn't you Rather Be Killing Communists?"

After a moment's hesitation the hermit grinned a lopsided leer and said "Yeah. Yes sir."

They flew on. As the plane soared over a peak to reveal an immense loch spread out for miles below them, its water a glowing turquoise, McGonagall began to whistle a Strauss waltz, and to think about fuel. They could land at an airfield—the man here had a gun. Then he would have to get rid of him somehow. And he looked at the hermit, to find that the gun was being trained on him.

"I've been doing some thinking," said the hermit. "and I know now, sure as anything, that you're the Antichrist and you aim to lead me to destruction amongst the hordes of the Foul Fleed himself. Something you said in your sleep, see. Something about a flag. Think it was a red one, mister, don't you? So now I'm taking over this plane, and you're taking a little jump."

"Can you fly an aeroplane?"

"God will guide me."

McGonagall sighed. The prostitute had been right. As he rose from his seat he made a grab for the gun—it

fell to the floor and as the two men struggled the plane looped and stalled before twisting earthwards. They were both thrown clear; the plane finally righted itself and glided gracefully over the loch to crash and explode on the mountainside. Meanwhile McGonagall and the hermit, both unconscious, were falling towards the brochure-like lake from 3000 feet.

The water was cold, crystal-clear, and extremely deep. Lower and lower Cornelia descended and still the sun lit up the depths. Debris hung in suspension—tree branches with their leaves still bright green; and human junk—cloth, food, cigarette packs. Deeper she went and still nothing living; no plants, no fish. She was hundreds of feet down when she reached the lake bed, which she found to be completely covered with a thick mat of starch-white moss. As she swam along the bed she prodded this soft growth, and chunks of it slipped away to reveal a dazzling mass of greens, silvers, reds and golds—perfectly preserved fish, crabs and insects; marine life of every shape and size, glowing and incandescent. The disturbed items floated up and drifted around like dead cosmonauts: here a child's doll; there a frog; there a cormorant tumbling in eternity.

Now as she followed the lake bed it began to show a marked drop in depth and the light faded as she progressed. She felt herself sweating inside the wet-suit. Way ahead were pinpricks of light that enlarged only very slowly as she approached. She strained her eyes to make out what the cluster signified. Minutes passed, the water seemed to thicken about her, and she could make out a green, cigar-shaped mass that

must have been the size of a cathedral. It was a gigantic creature, dragonlike and immobile, slumped on a subaqueous precipice that overhung a deep trench where the waters of the loch mutated from twilight down to jet green and fathomless. Cornelia swam up till the monster dwarfed her completely; now intending an exploratory touch of the creature's skin she pushed herself towards its side but misjudged her stroke and cannoned into one of its gigantic tentacles, which yielded and enclosed her completely in its soft and heavy flesh before springing back and tumbling her away again in somersaults. Then she struck upwards alongside the vast flanks until she could see rows of heavy dorsal fins lining the creature's back. Their colour almost hummed. Then, her eyes lit on a group of figures standing some way off between the scale-like fins. There were four of them and they stood quite immobile. She swam closer to the figures, who stood like commanders of a fantastic submarine. Four men, eyes open, quite rigid. They couldn't be alive. One of them was dressed in purple robes and had the figures 999 emblazoned on his forehead. High cheekbones, aquiline nose, and a mighty frame. His bearing was proud and he faced toward the head of the monster, one hand touching a fin, the other by his side holding an Egyptian emblematic staff. The second man wore a long leather trenchcoat into whose pockets the hands were thrust deep. Cadaverous eyes gazed mournfully to the rear. His square jaw was rough and unshaven; Cornelia recognised Hess. The third man wore an old tweed suit and army boots; he was looking at his feet and both thumbs were in his mouth—it was certainly Presley.

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She looked long and hard at the fourth man, and she remembered the photograph her mother had always kept on top of the mahogany dresser in the dining room—a color snapshot of a gangling figure with parted black hair and a rumply suit standing arm in arm under a banana tree with Castro. (The president wore jungle greens and had a fat cigar in his smiling mouth, but her mother's old love looked at the camera while holding his own cigar down at his side with a hint of distaste—or was it the sun in his eyes?) Now he stood in the same suit with his head up, his right hand on his heart, his left arm thrust out with clenched fist, his mouth open as if in mid-speech. His blue eyes glowed. She swam right up and touched his fist, then his head, then his old suit. She looked at him for a long time before checking her oxygen—not much left—and turning to Presley, whom she prodded curiously: this caused him to topple over on top of her, and the disturbance caused first McGonagall to fall back on top of Presley, followed by Hess and 999 who fell together to complete the pile, with Cornelia trapped beneath them. As she struggled to free herself the creature itself gave a jolt and began to slip towards the edge of its precipice.

Hess' lips were forced against her neck, 999's heavy bones were trapping her feet, Presley was caught up in her aquahung, and McGonagall stared out from between her legs. The creature slid some more before finally swooning over the edge and into the blackness of the trench carrying its human load. The man's eyes glowed more fiercely as the dark closed in and the water became considerably warmer. They were falling vertically, jammed between the monster's fins, and Cornelia was by now a little anxious. With a rare degree of patience she unwinced limb from limb as the rushing water began to burn, and now, groping in total darkness, she felt for the material of McGonagall's suit, identified him and tugged him free of the others. Then, pulling him with her, she struck out of the orbit of the falling monster and heaved herself upward.

She broke surface close to where Alice was sitting in the dinghy. When she was back aboard, and the stiff figure of McGonagall lay on the boards between them, Alice raised her eyebrows and looked at Cornelia, who said that she thought the man was her father.

Andy Souter wrote "The Quiet King of the Green South West", which was published in Interzone 4. He has the following to say about himself:

"I'm 33 and I live in Camden Town. My recent work includes writing for the mixed-media theatre group Moving Being: Earthly Paradise is my second collaboration with director/choreographer Geoff Moore and is about William Morris, D.G. Rossetti, peace camps and paedophilia: it opened in London in March and is currently touring. Running Dog Revue, an opera made with composer Camille Sanckers as a benefit for the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, was seen in London in January. Work in progress: a book with illustrator Satoshi Kitamura called in Darkest Europe, about Music, the 19th Century, Vampires, and the War of the Industrial Revolution; and a show for us Oslo theatre group about the overthrow of a matriarchy. Most of my work is about history: I tend to think that we've been living in the present for at least 3,300 years."

BEST OF THE YEAR

Two Interzone stories have been selected for Karl Edward Wagner's anthology *The Year's Best Horror Stories: Series XII* (DAW Books, USA). They are Malcolm Edwards's "After Images" (IZ 4) and Scott Bradfield's "The Flash! Kid" (IZ 5). Our congratulations to both authors.

Karl Edward Wagner writes: "I read widely in the process of finding stories for *The Year's Best...* To my mind Interzone is the best magazine in the field today. Keep up the great work."

Richard Cowper's "The Tithianian Factor" (IZ 5) is mentioned in the 1983 Recommended Reading List of the American SF news-magazine *Locus*. It is also the title-piece of Cowper's new short-story collection, just published by Gollancz at £7.95.

J.G. BALLARD NEWS

Empire of the Sun is the title of Ballard's important new novel, due from Gollancz in September 1984. It is loosely based on his own childhood experiences in Shanghai during World War II. We hope to be publishing more by Ballard in Interzone very soon. His story from IZ 2, "Memories of the Space Age", has been reprinted in the Penguin *Firebird 3* anthology and has also appeared in translation in the first issue of *Science Fiction*, an excellent new French magazine published by Editions Denoë, Paris, and edited by Daniel Riche.

Meanwhile, two publications related to Ballard should be appearing before his new novel. They are the *Re/Search J.G. Ballard Special*, a large-format illustrated book which reprints rare fiction and non-fiction by the author along with copious interviews and criticism (*Re/Search Publications, San Francisco*); and *J.G. Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*, compiled by David Pringle—an exhaustive 200-page listing of the author's works and writings about him (G.K. Hall and Co., Boston). Anyone with a strong interest in Ballard's fiction who wishes to know more about these matters is welcome to write to David Pringle at Interzone's main editorial address (please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope or international reply coupon).

SMALL ADS

Philip K. Dick Society. Membership £3.50 surface mail or £7 airmail p.a. Includes at least four issues of newsletter edited by Paul Williams, with original unpublished PKD material. Please make cheques payable to "Ms V.G. Buckle re P.K. Dick Society" and send to: K. Bowden and V. Buckle, 47 Park Avenue, Barking, Essex IG11 8QU.

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SF and speculative verse: K.V. Bailey's *Other Worlds*, and Alderney looks microcosmically at islands as universes, contains poems of transience and transcendence, poems of inner and outer space, and includes a sequence of "Rhymes for an Infant Astronaut". Available from Blanchard Books, Mannez, Alderney, Channel Islands. Price £2 post free.

What I believe

by T.G. Ballard

I believe in the power of the imagination to remake the world, to release the truth within us, to hold back the night, to transcend death, to charm motorways, to ingratiate ourselves with birds, to enlist the confidences of madmen.

I believe in my own obsessions, in the beauty of the car crash, in the peace of the submerged forest, in the excitement of the deserted holiday beach, in the elegance of automobile graveyards, in the mystery of multi-storey car parks, in the poetry of abandoned hotels.

I believe in the forgotten runways of Wake Island, pointing towards the Pacifics of our imaginations.

I believe in the mysterious beauty of Margaret Thatcher, in the arch of her nostrile and the sheen on her lower lip; in the melancholy of wounded Argentine conscripts; in the haunted smiles of filling station personnel; in my dream of Margaret Thatcher carassed by that young Argentine soldier in a forgotten motel watched by a tubercular filling station attendant.

I believe in the beauty of all women, in the treachery of their imaginations, so close to my heart; in the junction of their disenchanted bodies with the enchanted chromium rails of supermarket counters; in their warm tolerance of my own perversions.

I believe in the death of tomorrow, in the exhaustion of time, in our search for a new time within the smiles of auto-route waitresses and the tired eyes of air-traffic controllers at out-of-season airports.

I believe in the genital organs of great men and women, in the body postures of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Princess Di, in the sweet odours emanating from their lips as they regard the cameras of the entire world.

I believe in madness, in the truth of the inexplicable, in the common sense of stones, in the lunacy of flowers, in the disease stored up for the human race by the Apollo astronauts.

I believe in nothing.

I believe in Max Ernst, Delvaux, Dali, Titian, Goya, Leonardo, Vermeer, Chirico, Magritte, Redon, Durer, Tanguy, the Facteur Cheval, the Watts Towers, Bocklin, Francis Bacon, and all the invisible artists within the psychiatric institutions of the planet.

I believe in the impossibility of existence, in the humour of mountains, in the absurdity of electromagnetism, in the farce of geometry, in the cruelty of arithmetic, in the murderous intent of logic.

I believe in adolescent women, in their corruption by their own leg stances, in the purity of their dishevelled bodies, in the traces of their pudenda left in the bathrooms of shabby motels.

I believe in flight, in the beauty of the wing, and in the beauty of everything that has ever flown, in the stone thrown by a small child that carries with it the wisdom of statesmen and midwives.

I believe in the gentleness of the surgeon's knife, in the limitless geometry of the cinema screen, in the hidden universe within supermarkets, in the loneliness of the sun, in the garrulousness of planets, in the repetitiveness of ourselves, in the inexistence of the universe and the boredom of the atom.

I believe in the light cast by video-recorders in department store windows, in the messianic insights of the radiator grilles of showroom automobiles, in the elegance of the oil stains on the engine nacelles of 747s parked on airport tarmacs.

I believe in the non-existence of the past, in the death of the future, and the infinite possibilities of the present.

I believe in the derangement of the senses: in Rimbaud, William Burroughs, Huysmans, Genet, Celine, Swift, Defoe, Carroll, Coleridge, Kafka.

I believe in the designers of the Pyramids, the Empire State Building, the Berlin Fuhrerbunker, the Wake Island runways.

I believe in the body odours of Princess Di.

I believe in the next five minutes.

I believe in the history of my feet.

I believe in migraines, the boredom of afternoons, the fear of calendars, the treachery of clocks.

I believe in anxiety, psychosis and despair.

I believe in the perversions, in the infatuations with trees, princesses, prime ministers, in the derelict filling stations (more beautiful than the Taj Mahal), clouds and birds.

I believe in the death of the emotions and the triumph of the imagination.

I believe in Tokyo, Benidorm, La Grande Motte, Wake Island,
Eniwetok, Dealey Plaza.
I believe in alcoholism, venereal disease, fever and exhaustion.
I believe in pain.
I believe in despair.
I believe in all children.
I believe in maps, diagrams, codes, chess-games, puzzles, air-
line time-tables, airport indicator signs.
I believe all excuses.
I believe all reasons.
I believe all hallucinations.
I believe all anger.
I believe all mythologies, memories, lies, fantasies, evasions.
I believe in the mystery and melancholy of a hand, in the kind-
ness of trees, in the wisdom of light.

J.G. Ballard

J.G. Ballard wrote the above—which could be described as a surrealist's catalogue, “part poem, part prayer”—in response to a request from editor Daniel Riche for a contribution to a series entitled “Ce que je crois”. It first appeared in French in the premier issue of Riche's magazine *Science Fiction* (January 1984). This is the first time it has been published in English. We are indebted to the author, and to Daniel Riche, for permission to use it here.

LETTER

I know that editors, even worthy collective ones, think that designers can't read. But this one can, and she reads your stuff while pasting it up.

Gentlemen, I am really a little concerned about your editorial in this issue, and its implications. This is going to be a smashing issue. Mr Miller in particular has got the sort of illustrations I like to see in a fiction magazine. Human faces? Character? Pattern? Not a rocket ship in sight! Then you lot go and blow it with all that macho-man stuff about radical, hard, language-of-science, wow gosh zap BANG CRASH sf.

I have the advantage over most readers of having seen your editorial with Interzone 7 still fresh in mind. Of the two longer stories in that issue, one, I thought, might well have been a winner in your competition. The other would probably have been zapped out as failing to meet the brief.

I refer, of course, to Dr Blumlein's and Mr Ryman's stories respectively. The former upset me deeply. I could see that Dr Blumlein had excellent motives in writing it: as an image of a society in which absolutely anything is regarded as potentially saleable, but...

As read, "Tissue Ablation..." is not at all sympathetic. Perhaps because I read it holding a gleaming, sterilized scalpel (with which I cut paper, not flesh), it made my blood run cold. I found it cruel, dehumanising, even sadistic. I hated the use of Steve Biko's name as a grace-note in a story whose punchline is a man's testicles being pressed for oil. The fact that the man in question is Mr Reagan, who is ex-officio a "man we love to hate" makes this aspect less immediately obvious, but doesn't make it any better.

Yet, technically, it was a good story, and it was apparently written with good intentions. Still, I feel that your appeal for more radical, hard sf may produce quite a few stories (and if it doesn't, what's the point?) which show the same chilling, mechanistic attitude to human beings. [My current fave save among art critics, Peter Fuller, has a coincidentally appropriate phrase for what I am getting at: *General Anaesthesia. See Aesthetics After Modernism. Writers and Readers, 1983.*]

And these stories are by no means guaranteed to have the same firm, if misguided, moral foundation as Dr Blumlein's. I have been a supporter of Interzone from the

Continued ►►

MORE PAGES, MORE REVIEWS

The magazine goes up another four pages in size with this issue. Among other things, this gives us room to publish longer book reviews. We are pleased to present Mary Gentle's first review column, "On the Edge", and we hope to see a great deal more from her in the future. There will also be a few reviews by other hands, as we intend to increase our coverage of new fiction and occasional non-fiction in response to reader demand. (Publishers: please send review copies to Interzone's main editorial address.)

Mary Gentle is the author of a children's book, *A Hawk in Silver*. Her first adult novel, *Golden Witchbread*, was published by Collance in September 1983, and received some excellent reviews. It is due from Arrow paperbacks in the autumn of 1984. She is a former civil servant, and lives in Bournemouth, where she is currently working on a new novel.

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ON THE EDGE: reviews by Mary Gentle

Once upon a time (as the story goes) there was science fiction, and the "sense of wonder"—if anything, even more difficult to define than of itself, but having the advantage of being immediately recognisable when encountered. Wonder, like "sf" and "fantasy" and "speculative fiction" and "imaginative literature" (boundaries that blur into each other), has undergone some change since then. For me, still, it's what defines the literature, separates it out from the ostensibly domestic and mundane: "sense of wonder" as a way of perceiving the world; a unique quality of open-mindedness shared by the least literary and the most stylish of these fictions: fiction with, theoretically, no boundaries. It's a rule of thumb definition that can be expanded to include other qualities where necessary. Does that bring us any closer to an understanding? Nothing intractable is intended; only that, when I point at something and say "this is science fiction", we should both have an idea what's being discussed. And like most things in a mutable world, even rules of thumb are subject to change and development.

When a book is classified as sf involves, as Samuel Delany has said, an alteration in the very process of reading. The first sentence of Vonda McIntyre's *Supernatural* (Gollancz, £8.99) is "She gave up her heart quite willingly." In mundane fiction that would have to be a romantic metaphor; medical sf can make it literal reality. In this case the ambiguity is exploited in both directions. But *Supernatural* is genre sf, a low-key love story linked with a narrative of scientific discovery. FTL-ship pilots are surgically altered to withstand superluminal travel, their hearts replaced by mechanical pumps. One side-effect of this is that close contact between a pilot and an unaltered human being becomes impossible (mechanical and physical bihythms interfering with each other for some unspecified reason); thus the pilot Laenes and the crewman Radu's love affair should be tragic. Instead it's merely an irritation. The themes in the book rarely realise their full potential. And a ship's journey out of superluminal space into the seventh dimension, to the edge of the physical universe, ought to produce more than a slight frisson of excitement. It's the sub-plot, Radu's friendship with the genetically-altered amphibious diver Orcs, that holds the interest with subtle characterisation and inventive world-creation. *Supernatural* is the kind of colourful, sexually-liberated, and mildly socially-concerned novel that comes after Delany—a long way after. Unlike, say, "...Aye, and Gomorrah" it fails to disturb, or even excite very much.

Less classifiable, Neil Jordan's *The Dream of a Beast* (Chatto, £8.95) is a wonder-tale; an eyewitness narrative that gives a mythic quality to mundane life. Apocalyptic metamorphoses occur—"Streets I had walked on all my life began to grow strange blooms in the crevices. The stalks would eave their way along the shop-fronts and thick, oily, unrecognisable leaves would cover the plate-glass windows." The protagonist's change into a never fully-described creature is accompanied both by sophisticated symbols (the moth as psychopomp: spiritual advisor) and childhood's folksales, say, Beauty and the Beast. Sometimes this is heavy-handed,

particularly at the end. Style concentrates languorously on the physical, leaving the reader to puzzle out meaning—fantasy? satire? allegory? All emphasis on plot and logic has vanished, atmosphere is all-important; *The Dream of a Beast* has, in places, the feeling of genuine, not literary dreams.

On the other hand of can, truly, lack all sense of wonder; and chiefly when, as in Brian Stableford's *Balance of Power* (Hamlyn, £1.75), it's costume drama masquerading as science fiction. The novel draws on Columbus's voyage, and 18th century colonialism, transported to a supposedly alien world. It's a turgidly written and badly visualised story; characterisation is all but non-existent—though admittedly it may suffer from being read in isolation, being book five in a series of six ("the Daedalus mission"). The substitution of cat-like aliens for American Indians is ineffective, their culture being composed of fragments from most historical empires on Earth. Only twice does the story come alive: once when the viewpoint-character is offered hospitality by friendly natives and then witnesses their massacre, and once with a deliberate overturning of the "high priest" cliché. Any summary seems to bring out the *Boy's Own Paper*/Rider Haggard flavour of the narrative. The potential tragedy of colonisation is defused rather than averted by a sentimental homily about the need to find a "balance" between cultures. The reader is not even tempted to draw conclusions about our own culture.

When *Volvo Wakes* by Joy Chant (Unwin, £2.95) does raise just those questions: namely, how does this thought-experiment reflect on our world? It has in common with *Supernatural* the theme of how society affects the people living in it. The core of this story is the difficult, perhaps impossible relationship between Rahike and her lover Marizik, worked out to its painful conclusion. Where this works (and where *Supernatural* doesn't) is in how deeply the problems are rooted in people's lives. Here, male and female live separately in different-but-equal spheres of life, "City" and "Town", and there is no form of marriage or partnership outside the brief time required for conception. Matriarchal societies are difficult to depict without being either utopian or satirical. Rahike's, perhaps because it's portrayed as existing with other slightly different matriarchies round it, comes across as odd but convincing. Despite suffering from a rather "high romantic" style in places, when *Volvo Wakes* is a thoughtful book, unusually linked to Joy Chant's other works; not to be dismissed as just another pastoral-utopian fantasy.

And finally there is Frederick Dunstan's *Habitation One* (Fontana, £1.75), which I came to detest to like, in spite of its Sunday-supplement praise, on the grounds that a novel in which the entire cast of characters are murdered, mutilated, or driven insane 't' be all bad. It can. Dunstan has assumed the closed-city-in-the-wilderness cliché, made its technologically degenerate inhabitants act out a conservative Christian allegory, and created a story whose gratuitous cruelty is equalled only by its tedium. Unfortunately, *Habitation One* really only serves as an example: that people who are not Marvyn Peake ought not to attempt to write like him, and particularly not to write post-holocaust science fiction.

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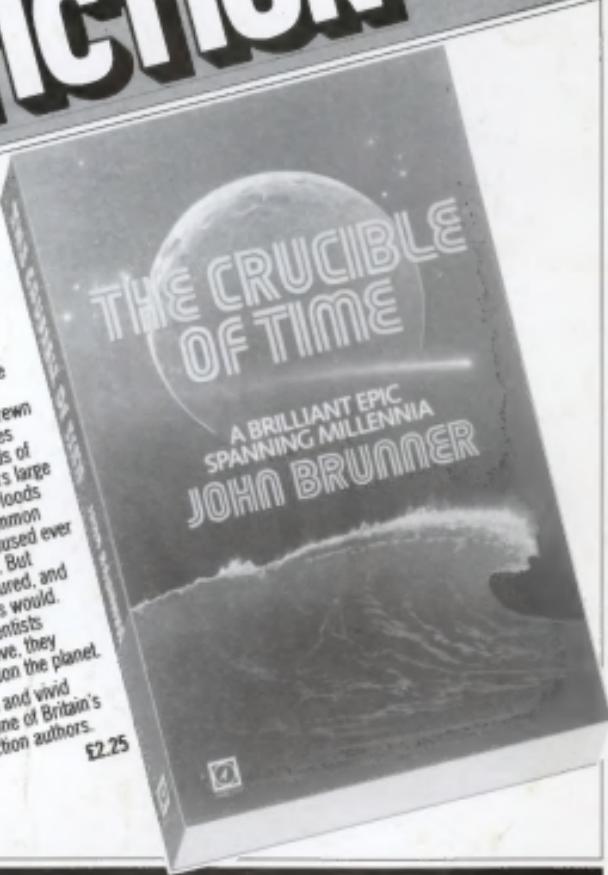
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